

**THE PEER INFLUENCE ON TAIWANESE
ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

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Doctor of Philosophy**

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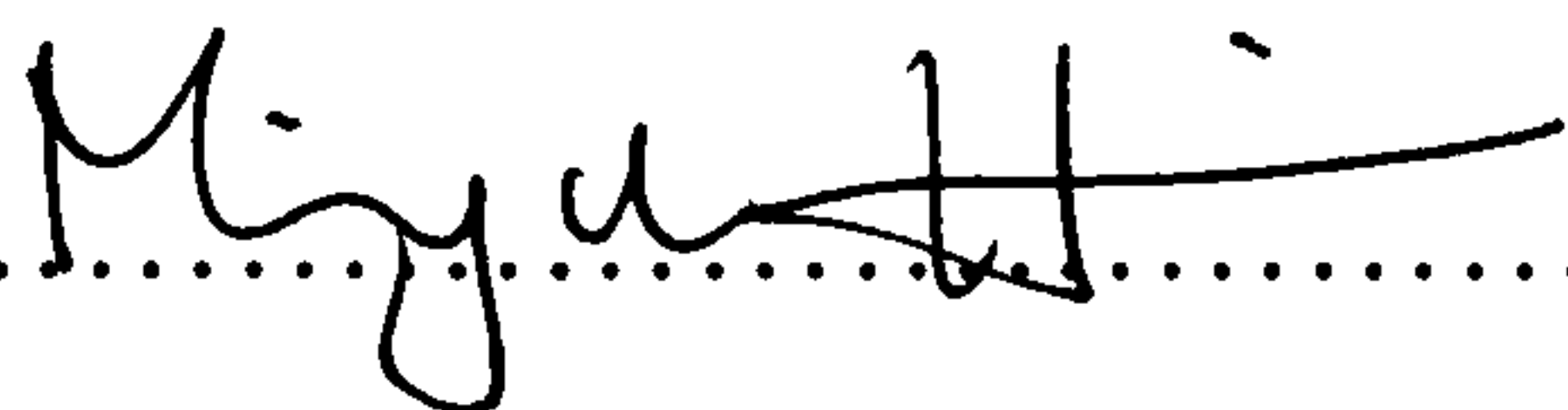
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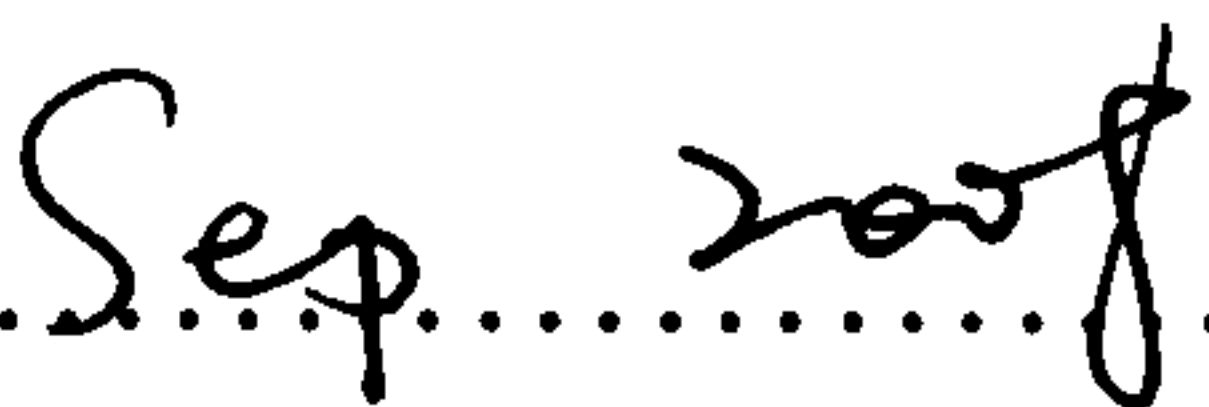
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Author’s Declaration

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, all the material in this thesis represents my own work and that no material is included which has been submitted for any other award or qualification.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Kung-Tzu Hsin-Lin, and my father, Yu-Tan Hsin.

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ABSTRACT

The research is to investigate the adolescence's peer discussion and its influences on adolescents' romantic relationships. Based on development theories, adolescences are changing their social network into peers and they start to have interests in the opposite sex. This study structured a hypothesis that there is a peer influence on Taiwanese adolescents' romantic relationship.

Adolescence has been recognized as a developing stage in psychosexual, psychosocial, and cognitive areas. An experience of passionate love in romantic relationship can become the most crucial thing, and is also a lesson to search proper partner in future life. Friends' opinions about relationships and sexuality address influences on adolescents.

This study applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data collection. First, focus groups with adolescents and semi-structured interviews with school counsellors and teachers are to provide qualitative data. Content analysis has been applied in data analysis to categorize the themes. Second, a questionnaire was applied by adopting the themes generated from the qualitative results. The results showed that there is a peer influences on Taiwanese adolescents' romantic

relationships in dating activities, dating dress, couple-making, and advice giving. They also benefit from peers' experiences in romantic relationships. Furthermore, the finding on peer influences on adolescents was contradictory. Young people view others' behaviours as an influence of peers while stating their behaviours as being independent and non-influenced.

Analyses about young people's opinions and school teachers' observation have been discussed with respects to literatures and theories. It has been argued that peer influences among adolescents are both negative and positive. Though adolescents are judged as being influenced by their peers, they insisted that they are independent while making decisions. Recommendations are made for educational authorities, school staff, and young people.

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

1.1. Introduction

‘At the moment, young adults like you may have expectations, excitements,

Of course confusion and worries about your development,

With the coming of feelings of love, physical changes, and close relationships,

Here, we offer a comfortable environment,

We are here to listen,

And face the coming of puberty with you’

This statement on the website of the Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health, Taiwan (2007), emphasises young people’s romantic relationships and how they deal with their feelings of growing up, and it can be seen that the government is concerned about young people’s relationships.

The government has become aware of the importance of adolescents’ development. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan has started to improve the educational environment for young people, and adolescents’ development is also be emphasized (MOE, 2007a). On

the pathway into adulthood, young people face challenges from physical, psychosocial and cognitive changes.

Adolescents' mental health and development have been researched as factors which could result in social and health problems, such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, which have been targeted as some of the most important issues for society (MOE, 2002, 2004d).

Theoretically, Freud, Erikson, and Piaget all indicated the dramatic changes in adolescence in the areas of physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development; Erikson especially points out that peers become the young people's key social agency (Beaty, 2002, Piaget, 1999, Erikson, 1994, Freud, 1977). Both physical and mental changes occur in adolescence as the price of entry into adulthood. Research has also shown that young people increasingly spend time with their peers,, friends bring both positive and negative influences (Henry et al., 2007, Umana-Taylor and Bamaca-Gomez, 2003, Erwin, 1993, Steca et al., 2007). Interests in romantic relationships are partially the results of physical and psychosocial developments; many young people start their romantic relationships during adolescence, and seek support and advice from others. Both the positive and negative influences of romantic relationships have been discussed (Spruijt-Metz and Spruijt, 1997, Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2003, Overbeek et

al., 2007, Sorensen, 2007). Romantic relationships may help young people to search for appropriate future partners and healthy romantic relationships may also bring feelings of happiness and contentment to maintain self-esteem; however, young people can also suffer depression from romantic relationships. Thus, young people's mental health is correlated with the way they deal with their romantic relationships.

This study seeks to adapt the research methods and structure of Brown and Clasen (1985)'s research on peer pressure in adolescence. In Brown and Clasen's (ibid.) study, peer pressure was discussed based on Erikson's theory about adolescence and their peer groups; focus groups used by Brown and Clasen (1985) also raised the topics that young people were interested in; further measurements were developed according to those topics (Clasen and Brown, 1985). Based on Erikson's theories about the psychosocial development of adolescents, this study will focus on young people's romantic relationships in relation to peer influences.

1.1.1 Outline of the Study

The study aims to understand young people's romantic relationships with respect to peer influences from both adolescents and school teacher/counsellors' perspectives.

First, the theoretical framework in adolescent development is to be presented and then relevant literature on peer influence and romantic relationships will be reviewed. This will be followed by an introduction to the methods which this study will apply. Next, the results will be presented in order to answer the research question. Finally, there will be discussion of the results and any implications will be identified.

The theoretical frameworks of adolescent development will be reviewed. Adolescence is a period of dramatic growth including psychosocial, psychosexual and cognitive developments (Brendgen et al., 2002, Larson et al., 1999). Erikson, Freud and Piaget are the key figures in developmental research. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development postulates an identity crisis for adolescents; while aged between 12 to 18, adolescents face a challenge between identity and role confusion (Jacobs, 1992, Erikson, 1965). Using Erikson's theory, Beaty (2002) explains the potential of adolescents' development, their need to form personal relationships, and also focuses on what may occur when young people fail to build relationships with others, such as the problems they may face in their future life. Freud also stated that young people aged 12 to 18 are in the genital stage which is initiated with physical development and highlights the start of their social activities (Roazen, 2000, Freud, 1977). At this particular stage between childhood and adulthood, Freud indicates that adolescents

experience physical growth and learn to deal with their sexual drives; this is also the time when adolescents realise their libido and desire (Jacobs, 1992, Freud, 1977). Piaget's cognitive development discusses how changes in the thinking ability of adolescents means that they start to question their roles (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). With the various developments, adolescents grow to realise their identity, to structure their social life, and to reason.

Peer influences have been studied widely in literature and research. For adolescents, the influence of peers becomes more important than family influence since young people are eager to be engaged in groups. 'Peer group' is defined by the BBC as a term used to describe people of a similar age, often when talking about adolescents (http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/your_kids/teen_peer.shtml). Peer influences can be both positive and negative (Lingren, 1995, Black, 2002). Peer pressure can encourage adolescents to do things that their friends do, for example, joining sports clubs, participating in activities, and building relationships. Some research has shown that yielding to peer pressure is the price of group membership (Clasen and Brown, 1985, Santor et al., 2000). Although young people have to compromise, they still want to be part of the group. Lingren (1995) argued that a peer group can offer young people affection, sympathy, and understanding while they are searching for their identity and autonomy. Doing the same things makes them feel that

they really belong to the group, and they are not different from others; only peers can really understand them and are in the same position.

Romantic relationship issues are popular topics among young people. The first encounters with romantic relationships normally occur in adolescence; because of this, young people's perceptions and knowledge of romantic relationships influences their actual romantic relationships. Previous research has held that peers also play an important role in adolescents' romantic relationships (Santor et al., 2000, Black, 2002, Brown, 1999, Connolly et al., 2000, Furman and Wehner, 1997). With the importance of peers, young people take friends' advice on their own romantic relationships, and believe that friends' experiences can also apply to them. Support and comfort from friends are also needed. Thus, the power of peer influence on young people's romantic relationships cannot be dismissed; however, young people do have different opinions about peer influence.

The methodology of this study has used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Triangulation will be discussed. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews have been designed to act as qualitative research which will obtain information about young people's attitudes towards peer influences on romantic relationships. Taiwanese adolescents and school staff including home teachers and counsellors have participated in this research.

The analysis has been undertaken using a thematic approach drawn from content analysis to categorise themes that young people talk about with friends in relation to romantic relationships. The quantitative data has been acquired using a questionnaire to be modified following the results obtained from the focus group discussion and interviews, the Peer Pressure Inventory by Clasen and Brown (1985) was used in the design of the questionnaire. Piloting was undertaken to ensure validity and reliability. The target of questionnaire survey was Taiwanese adolescents. The questionnaire seeks to verify the influences from peers.

Results will be presented to deal with the research question and its sub-questions. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be listed to answer the questions. The final discussion will consider the results in the light of previous research and its results. Emerging issues for further research will also be presented. Finally, recommendations for policy making, practicality, and further research will be suggested to promote availability of education materials suitable for all.

1.2. The Research Situation

This study is based on the fact that Taiwan has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy among Asian countries, and thus young people's romantic relationships, sex and relationship

education are relevant (MOE, 2003c, 2004b, 2003d, Lee, 2004, Lin, 2004a, Wu, 2003). The situation clearly reveals a problem of Taiwanese young people and their knowledge of romantic and sexual relationships. Schools and parents have promoted schemes to ensure that young people get the proper information in relations to romantic and sexual relationships. However, there has been a discrepancy between young people's needs and what is offered by adults, which has created a gap between the two generations (MOE, 2006c, Sun, 2006b).

Peer pressure was defined in Clasen and Brown's research as the primary mechanism for transmitting group norms and maintaining loyalties among group members (Clasen and Brown, 1985); their research showed that peer pressure actually affects young people's social life in a number of ways.

Little research has focused on young people's romantic relationships (Shulman and Collins, 1997). This is also one of the reasons that young people's peer influences and romantic relationships are worth further researches.

1.2.1 The Researcher's Perspectives

News articles about teenage pregnancy in Taiwan have highlighted the importance of the health and education situation of young people, and the problem needs proper solutions.

Dropout rates and midway houses are under consideration by educational authorities in respect of teenage pregnancy (Yiu, 2004, Wang, 2004a) as it has clearly become a serious issue to be tackled.

Working as a high school teacher in Taiwan, I observed young people being affected by their peers in various ways such as smoking, truancy, and dress. Many of them started talking about romance with friends, and also took advice from friends. Mixed gender social activities were set up and allowed opportunities for young people to meet and get to know one another. Some students were in romantic relationships, which seemed to have become important for them. It was obvious that adolescents were starting to have awareness of their sexuality and romantic relationships.

However, adults always worry about adolescents. In Taiwan, which is still an exam-oriented country, parents and teachers would like to see young people focus on their study; however, young people's change and development cannot be ignored. Sex and relationships education are discussed by teachers with young people. The materials have been designed by adults to fit young people's needs; however, this may not be appropriate for the young people as the materials are based on what adults believe the young people need. Recently, there have been reviews of and comments on what may be proper sex and

relationship education (MOE 2006c, Sun, 2006b). Adults criticise the erotic material in sex education while young people feel that that this is not true as it has little impact on them. Thus, a distance has been established between adults and young people. Teenage pregnancy is not only a difficult situation in schools, but also an issue at universities; it is an issue which many teachers find difficult. During my teaching years, I saw teenage pregnancy cases which ended in termination and dropout. The pregnant students did not have the same rights as other pupils and hardly received any support from adults. It seems that, to solve this problem, young people's sex and relationships need to be understood and given proper assistance.

A great deal of research has led to the notion that attitudes play an important role in affecting people's thoughts and behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), and the behaviour and action in people's romantic relationships may be traced to people's attitudes. Therefore, in order to allow for the healthy development of young people, their problems need to be recognized and appropriate support be given. This research will explore the thoughts and behaviour of Taiwanese adolescents towards romantic relationships, and address the issue of peer influence upon them.

1.3. Background to the Research Problem

Adolescents face dramatic change in their physical growth, psychosocial development, cognitive thinking, and the establishment of their own identity. Taiwan has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy among Asian countries (Wu, 2003, Lin, 2004a), and as a result there have been many young girls seeking solutions to unplanned pregnancy and education problems have also emerged. Most young girls either have a termination or leave education in order to be able to keep the baby (Yiu, 2004, Wang, 2004b, Wang, 2004a). This type of pregnancy problem may be the result of peer education about romantic and sexual relationships. Social and health problems arise from young people's actions regarding sex and romantic relationships. Schools are supposed to be a safe environment for young people to grow up in; young people should be able to make their own decisions to protect themselves if sex and relationship education provide them with the materials and information they need to do so. According to Hsin's research (2003) into the counselling system operating in schools in Taiwan, adolescents are starting to have romantic relationships and peer groups are becoming more important in their social lives, but they seldom talk about their romantic relationships with their parents or teachers. Wong (2004), the Executive Director of the Child Welfare League Foundation in Taiwan, said that the growing number of problems fancied by young people in their dealing with the opposite sex has to be taken

seriously by society. Obviously, young people's behaviours and opinions toward sex and romantic relationships are important issues in Taiwan.

Peer relationships start to play a large part in adolescents' lives, and friends tend to replace the family in young people's social and leisure activities (Lingren, 1995). Young people are influenced by their friends in many areas, such as dress and hair style; for example, Black (2002) mentioned that all her eight graders both looked and sounded alike. In Taiwan, peer pressures are likely to be powerful factors in both friendship and romantic relationship issues for young people since they tend to talk about their lives with friends who give them advice which affects their opinions (Hsin, 2003). Lingren (1995) pointed out that young people tend to have informal social interactions in mixed-sex groups and that this might encourage them to have sexual relationships, which in turn places them at risk of sexually transmitted diseases. It has been reported that teenagers are under pressure from peers in sexual relationships (MOE, 2003b, Maxwell, 2002, Lingren, 1995). An example of this was given in a broadcast on Channel 4 in 2003 in a programme entitled "Adult at Fourteen"; the programme stated that a young girl had started to have intercourse after being encouraged by one of her friends who pretended to be experienced in sexual relationships. Hence, the message these young people receive from their friends in terms of romantic relationship issues could have a powerful affect on the adolescents' lives.

1.4. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover if there is peer influence on adolescents' romantic relationships by revealing the relationship between peer influences and young people's romantic relationships. In order to understand young people's social life, relevant literature and research will be reviewed and a survey will be conducted among school staff and young people. Clasen and Brown discussed the relationship between peer pressure and young people's behaviours and found that the relationship contains both encouraging and discouraging aspects (Clasen and Brown, 1985).

The findings of this research are expected to express young people's opinions about peer relations and romantic relationships, and how these relations are viewed by school staff. It is not only young people who can benefit from the results of this study, but also education authorities who will be able to improve the current sex and relationship education so that it better able to meet young people's needs; moreover, school staff will also have the opportunity to improve their communication skills when talking to young people.

Several studies have indicated that peer groups have an influence on adolescents (Clasen and Brown, 1985, Bednar and Fisher, 2003, Brown, 1999, Henry et al., 2007). However, limited

research has been conducted on how peer groups affect young people's romantic relationships (Brown, 1999). Therefore, this research will focus on the information young people receive from peers and how they deal with such influences when romantic relationships are concerned. The observations and opinions of school staff, including home teachers and school counsellors, will also be gathered regarding young people and their peer and romantic relationships. These two sets of views will be compared in order to discover how adolescents view the peer influences and romantic relationships as well as how they are viewed.

1.5. Research Questions

This study aims to explore peer influence on Taiwanese adolescents' attitudes towards romantic relationships. The research question seeks to discover whether there is peer influence on Taiwanese adolescents' romantic relationships. The hypothesis is that peer influence does indeed exist in Taiwanese adolescents' romantic relationships. This research intends to find the answers to the research question and believes that the hypothesis will be proved. Literature and research will be reviewed as the basis of the study.

The main research question stands:

‘Is there a peer influence on Taiwanese adolescents' romantic relationships?’

This question will explore adolescents' identity with respect to romantic relationships, and also find out Taiwanese adolescents' opinions on romantic relationships and their peers' influences upon them. Issues about adolescent development, romantic relationships, and peer influence are to be studied. The following sub-questions will discover young people's perception of romantic relationships, their thinking and their attitude about peer influences. It will be necessary to address the following questions to respond to the main research question.

- A. What influences do adolescents have from peers in relation to romantic relationships?
 - i. What are the factors contributing to different peer influences?
- B. How do peers influence adolescents' romantic relationships?
 - i. How do adolescents get information about romantic relationships?
 - ii. How do adolescents perceive romantic relationships
- C. Is there an influence from counselling services on adolescents in their romantic and peer relationships?

1.6. Summary

This chapter has presented a brief overview of the study, including the background to the research problem, research questions, and an outline of the structure of the written work. A variety of research studies and theories have aimed at understanding adolescents and their peer relationships, and these will be reviewed in the next chapter. Peer influences have been recognised as having both positive and negative influences on adolescents. There have been reports stating that young people's relationships problems are connected to their mental health. Sex and relationship education are needed in universities. The study will review previous research and explore young people's attitudes towards romantic relationships in relation to peer influences. First, relevant theories and literature will be reviewed, and this will be followed by a description of the methodology. The approaches which are to be applied in data collection and analysis will also be examined. The research questions will be answered with results from research methods. Research limitations will be presented. At the end, discussion and implications are to be presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2 : Theoretical Framework: Adolescent Development

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the relevant theories in the development of adolescents will be presented and discussed. Young people are experiencing dramatic changes in their psychosocial, psychosexual, and cognitive development. The key theories include Erikson's psychosocial development, Freud's psychosexual development and Piaget's cognitive development. Freud, Erikson and Piaget all indicated various growth and changes during adolescence including physical and mental growth. Erikson (1994) explained that adolescents are in the crisis of searching for an identity and may experience role confusion; at the same time, their peers start to occupy their social life. Freud (1977) believed that adolescents are in the genital stage with their physical development and are also at the start of their social activities; Piaget (1969), however, focused on cognitive development in terms of the abstract and hypothetical thinking styles that young people develop at this stage (Jacobs, 1992, Roazen, 2000, Piaget, 1999, Erikson, 1994). Under such developmental pressure, adolescence is an essential and critical period in the transition to adulthood.

2.1.1 Definition of adolescence

There have been various definitions of adolescence in psychosocial development. First, Erikson defined it as the last stage of childhood and as a period of life between childhood and adulthood; it also is a period of fast change (Erikson, 1994). Adolescence may also be recognised as a time of role adjustment in the larger social context and a move away from family (Jessor and Jessor, 1977). Many studies have also defined adolescence as a period when young people are searching for their identity, face body changes, and become confused in relationships. (Tatar, 2001a, Tatar, 2001b, Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001, McCabe and Ricciardelli, 2003, Halpern et al., 2005).

Adolescence is an essential stage of transfer into adulthood; young people not only experience dramatic physical development, but also cognitive and psychosocial growth. In this period, young people learn to cope with body changes, search for identity, learn to establish close relationships with others, and try to become mature and fully developed people (Moore and Rosenthal, 1998, Brown, 1999). Facing such challenges, young people start to question and feel confused about themselves and their future, and expand their living world from family to the society.

Adolescents are at an ambiguous stage with various developments. These changes also make it the most important stage in people's growth as they turn from childhood into adulthood. The changes that occur in adolescence include psychosocial development, physical growth, psychosexual development, and cognitive development. The following section will explain why adolescence is an important stage in a person's development, and how the changes work on young people.

2.2 Psychosocial development

This section explores the area of adolescent psychosocial development, particularly in relations to identity, peers and criticism. The focus on searching for an identity lies in the question of person identifying who he or she is. The term peer refers to the persons who share the same developmental stage as young people; this term will be discussed in section 3.2.

Erikson's psychosocial development stages have been acknowledged as the most influential theory about human's psychosocial development (Newman and Newman, 2002, Shaffer, 2002). Psychosocial development explains how people interact with themselves and with others. For adolescents, Jessor and Jessor (1977) indicated that young people's psychosocial development is related to their behaviour.

Numerous studies (Bukatko and Daelher, 2004, Salkind, 2004, Berger, 2001, Berk, 1998, Kroger, 1989) have suggested that Erikson's 'eight stages of men' remains the most dominant theory of psychosocial development. Erikson's theory focuses on the psychosocial growth that comes from overcoming the 'crisis' in the individual's present stage of development and their transition onto the next stage. The eight stages include: basic trust v. basic mistrust, autonomy v. shame and doubt, initiative v. guilt, industry v. inferiority, identity v. role confusion, intimacy v. isolation, generativity v. stagnation, and ego integrity v. despair (Erikson, 1965). According to Erikson, adolescents are at the fifth stage, facing the crisis of identity and role confusion.

Marcia's identity status is a useful theory to add to the discussion of Erikson's psychosocial development theory (Berger, 2001, Bee and Boyd, 2002, Yoder, 2000, Marcia, 1980).

Marcia's identity status paradigm indicates that young people's identity formation is influenced by two main factors, commitment and crisis. Both Erikson's and Marcia have influenced theories of the psychological development of adolescence (Berger, 2001) and these theories will be discussed in this section, reviewing both the relevant research and critiques of that research.

2.2.1 Erikson's psychosocial development in adolescence

Erikson (1965), who was an artist and turned psychoanalyst, developed his psychosocial development theory after being inspired by Freud's psychosexual theory (Erikson, 1965). Erikson initially became aware of the importance of the way that development influences not only the body, and the mind, but affects cultural issues. He thus proposed a theory of psychosocial development. Freud's theory indicated that children have to live through the conflicts that people have to resolve to remain psychologically alive (Erikson, 1994). Based on observation and research, Erikson developed the eight stages of psychosocial development (Damon et al., 2003). Erikson's theory indicates that human progress through the eight stages from childhood to old age, and it explains what happens if the process of growth is blocked (Erikson, 1994, Kroger, 1989, Newman and Newman, 2002). There are eight different stages in Erikson's psychosocial development (Erikson, 1965). He believed that people in every stage have different problems; only when the previous crisis is resolved can the individual proceed to the next one. Human progress is based on the completeness of the resolution of the crisis of the previous stage and the step to the next stage. Therefore, a secure foundation in earlier stages is a very important contributing factor in a child's growth to a healthy and mature adult (West, 1992, Erikson, 1994, Hoffman et al., 1994).

Erikson named this framework as the 'eight stages of men' when he presented this theory;

however, nowadays the research has revised 'Erikson's psychosocial development' to address the equality of genders. Erikson's 'eight ages of man' is the predominant theory in adolescent's psychosocial development (Berger, 2001, Berk, 1998, Bukatko and Daelher, 2004, Salkind, 2004). The theory mainly focused on the growth that came from overcoming a crisis in the current stage and stepping onto the next stage. Among the eight stages of human development, adolescence stands in the position of the fifth stage where young people need to face crisis of identity and role confusion.

Adolescence is the period when young people face body growth from childhood to adulthood and become concerned about their images of others and self (Erikson, 1965). According to Erikson the main task for young people at this stage is to establish their identity by adjusting their roles in a social context where they start to be aware of how they are judged,. Role confusion is a crisis where young people fail in the establishment of their identity (Shore and Massimo, 1969, Erikson, 1965).

Erikson's theory has also dominated theories of psychosocial development in Taiwan (Lin, 1994). Studies have been conducted, based on Erikson's psychosocial development theory, into: violent behaviour (Cheng, 2001); parent involvement (Lee, 2003); internet activity (Chen, 2004, Chun, 2004); premature sexual behaviour (Kuo, 2004); parent-teacher relations

(Chang, 2005); leisure attitudes (Pai, 2005), college students' relationship attitudes (Dong, 2003); and young girls' subjectivity (Ru, 2006). The range of studies show that Erikson's theory has been widely adopted in Taiwanese research in this field.

2.2.1.1 Identity

Identity is defined as how an individual views him/herself, as well as how he/she is seen by others (Josselson, 1994, Cotterell, 1996). Therefore, in the age of adolescence, searching for an identity is the main way in which young people try to understand themselves and also build up relations with others.

According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, adolescents try to establish identities in order to proceed into adulthood (Erikson, 1965). This struggle is a crucial stage of transfer to adulthood (Kroger, 1989, Shore and Massimo, 1969). Young people face the crisis when they are not able to find a position in society, and they also have difficulty in progressing to the following stages. Erikson's psychosocial stage about adolescence is given below:

Table 2-1 Erikson's Psychosocial Development (Shaffer, 2002, Caggia, 2000, Savage, 2000))

Approximate age	Erikson’s crisis	Significant events	Key social agent
12 -20 years	Identity vs. role confusion	This is the crossroad between childhood and maturity. ‘Who am I?’ is the key issue for adolescents. They question and rebuild the ego identity they have established in childhood. They are trying out roles in their search for their inner self as they try to become adults.	The society of peers

The table above explains Erikson’s psychosocial development in adolescence. The table also shows some key points in adolescents’ development: identity, role confusion and peers. Searching for identity and engaging in peer groups are the main events in adolescence. In this section identity and role confusion will be discussed, while peers will be further discussed in 2.2.1.2.

Adolescents discover their status by thinking about who they are; this is a process which helps to shape young people’s identity. Bee and Boyd (2002) and Hoffman et al (1994) suggested that young people have to examine their identity and roles in order to achieve sexual maturity and occupational identity. Physical changes lead adolescents to realise their sexual identity, and reasoning and thinking abilities help them to consider their future. At this stage, adolescents as they gain the ability to reason start questioning their values, their

belief and priorities. Once the identity establishment is completed, there will be no confusion about their roles; so, young people are able to progress to the next stage.

Role confusion may occur when the young people fail to establish their identity and this can cause them to become uncertain about their status and have difficulties in conquering the next crisis, that of establishing intimacy with others.

Identity construction is also connected to intimate relations with peers (Montgomery, 2005, Kroger, 1997), which is a dramatic development in adolescence. The importance of peers has been raised as the peer has become the young person's key social agent. The society of peers will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.1.2 Peers

Erikson's psychosocial development indicates the importance of peers during adolescence.

While creating their identity, young people also start to establish their social network with people outside their family and, therefore, peers become adolescents' main social agent with whom they spend time (Erikson, 1994, Cotterell, 1996). The peer has been recognised as a support for young people in searching for an identity (Erikson, 1994) and it is important for young people to be accepted by their peers (Erikson, 1965). Peers structure a social

network for adolescents to connect to people outside the family, and they occupy a role in young people's life that adolescents relate closely to.

The peer group controls the adolescents' thinking and their behaviour (Josselyn, 1952). The key point is that adolescents' sense of empathy and support is easily developed among peers because they are closer to each other in age, compared to their other family members. However, conflicts with their families might occur when the peer influence and independent thinking pulls them out of their attachments to the family.

Intimate relationships with peers may support young people's search for an identity, although Erikson (1997) argued that the process of developing an identity and intimacy should be seen as independent (Montgomery, 2005). In adolescence the identity search and the establishment of intimacy may overlap. Peer relations in adolescence will be further discussed in 3.2.

2.2.1.3 Criticism

Although Erikson's psychosocial stages have been recognised as one of the most important theories in development, some criticisms have been raised. First, as Shaffer (2002) pointed out, in Erikson's theory there are no explanations of what causes the crisis in the development

stages. Secondly, Erikson's theory weakness lies in the lack of details about the adolescent identity crisis and his clinical approach (Coleman and Hendry, 1999, Stevens, 1983, Lo, 2005). Young people are given a developmental task but they are confused about what they are going to cope with and may start to question their development. Therefore, it is not clear about the experience that people need to go through, and the influences of the previous stage on the following stage are also ambiguous. Young people are expected to cope with the developmental crisis indicated in Erikson's theories but they have no idea what they will be going through.

Erikson's theory was also questioned because of the ambiguous borderline between stages. Bee and Boyd (2002) have argued that Erikson's stages seem to oversimplify the crises (Bee and Boyd, 2002). In Erikson's theory, each stage is followed by the next only when the crisis is completed; thus, young people must have realised their identity before they build up intimacy with another. In fact, the crises might not only exist at a certain age of life and may overlap with others. Montgomery (2005) explained that identity search and intimacy may both occur at the same stage, which is different from Erikson's linear development theory. Young people might still be confused about their identity as they proceed to the next stage of intimacy, or young people may have already started to build intimate relations while they are still searching for an identity. As a result, some studies have suggested that

identity searching is a task that an individual has to tackle throughout their life (Lo, 2005, Kroger, 2000).

Moreover, having a different background is another area which does not quite fit with Erikson's theory (Kroger, 1989, Montgomery, 2005). Marcia (1980) and Kroger (1989) have argued that Erikson's theory did not consider factors stemming from different cultural backgrounds (Kroger, 1989). Different cultural systems have brought young people various ideas of identity and differing values. Young people in different cultural contexts might have encountered different developmental issues. In addition, the family structures that young people grow up in may also lead to different times for their identity search. Young people who grow up in an extended family might face a different crisis in searching for an identity than an adolescent in a core family. Thus, the environment that young people grow up in plays an important role in their identity search during adolescence.

Erikson's psychosocial stages is the main theory behind the psychosocial development of the individual in Taiwan (Lin, 1994); however, cultural differences also need to be considered. Lo (2005) and Chang and Huang (1982) argued that, in Taiwan, young people are likely to postpone their identity search until late adolescence or early adulthood (Lo, 2005, Chang and Huang, 1982). Lewis also suggested that Asian youths are more likely to have the status of

foreclosure and confusion (Lewis, 2003). Young people without identity status could find it very difficult to search for their occupational identity. Taiwanese adolescents might have to decide which field at university, or they might be confused about their future direction. This has resulted in frustration and depression in young adults who become stuck in role confusion.

Although it has been criticised, Erikson's theory still occupies an important place in adolescent identity formation. Marcia (1980) extended Erikson's theory into identity formation which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Marcia's identity status paradigm on adolescence

Generated from Erikson's identity and role confusion crisis, Marcia proposed a paradigm of identity status from crisis and commitment, including statuses of foreclosure, moratorium, diffusion and achievement (Bergh, 2005, McConnell, 1994, Bee and Boyd, 2002, Berk, 1998, Marcia, 1980). Every young person is located in one of these four statuses based on their exploration and commitment. The following figure (figure 2-1) describes Marcia's identity status theory.

Degree of commitment to a particular role or value	High		
	Low		
	High	Identity achievement status (crisis is past)	Foreclosure status
	Low	Moratorium status (in mid crisis)	Identity diffusion status
Degree of crisis			

Figure 2-1 Identity Status by Marcia (Bee and Boyd, 2002)

Marcia’s identity status formation theory expands Erikson’s psychosocial development stage of identity searching (Bee and Boyd, 2002). It explains how adolescents form their identity by experiencing crisis and commitment. Marcia identifies two factors that format the four stages: the crisis is the exploration where young people have to make decisions when different opinions are raised while the commitment is the result of such exploration (Bee and Boyd, 2002).

According to Marcia’s theory, there are four types of identity formation: foreclosure, moratorium, diffusion and achievement. Santrock (2008) Bee and Boyd (2002) and Shaffer

(2002) explain the four identity statuses with examples: first, as can be seen in the table above, young people who have been through the crisis and reached commitment are able to achieve identity achievement status. Second, when young people complete the crisis but are not ready for commitment, they are in the moratorium status, which is a state of delayed commitment. Young people are in the foreclosure status when they have not explored their crisis but have already made a commitment. Finally, those who fail to explore the crisis and are not able to commit stay in the identity diffusion status. Therefore, young people will be located in one of the four identity statuses, according to their individual progress.

In all, young people have different approaches to identity acquisition through exploration and commitment. However, the identity searching process may be affected by various factors; for instance one of the factors that affects progress is social context, which is discussed below.

2.2.2.1 Criticism

Marcia's identity formation paradigm has supported psychosocial development theory by the detail description of the identity formation process; however, criticisms have been raised from a number perspectives. First, it is too restrictive to state that adolescence is the stage of identity formation since some studies indicate that identity formation may take place

throughout a person's life (Bee and Boyd, 2002, Shaffer, 2002) or need to adapt to different social contexts. Sato et al's research on age and identity shows that people's identity changes several times during adulthood (Sato et al., 1997). People need to adjust their roles as they age or when they move into a different social context. This is applicable to older people who need to search for a new identity because the formation can occur throughout their lifespan, or international students who study abroad and have to adjust to a new environment. In these examples, identity formation takes place as a person ages or as their social context changes.

Moreover, gender is also discussed as a differential factor in identity formation. Boys and girls may have different timelines in approaching identity formation in Erikson and Marcia's theories (Bee and Boyd, 2002, Berk, 1998, Lytle et al., 1997, Ru, 2006). It seems that girls fit in Marcia's identity paradigm in their development while boys mostly delay their identity formation until early adulthood (Bee and Boyd, 2002). Ru (2006) has identified differences between genders in identity formation in Taiwanese adolescents, and this includes not only psychosocial development, but also physical growth, which will be discussed further.

Social environment is one of the factors that affect identity formation (Yoder, 2000, Berk, 1998). Different social contexts may bring the youth into different identity formation.

Yoder (2000) argues that Marcia's theory seems to focus too much on personal responsibility in personal development and does not consider social-cultural influences (Yoder, 2000). Economic, educational and social structures bring various challenges for the youth in identity formation, along with the historical time (Berk, 1998, Shaffer, 2002). Shaffer (2002) suggests that young people in the last century mostly engaged in the identity foreclosure status by adopting their parents' roles, without experiencing crisis; but this situation has changed in the industrial society of today. Therefore, society and historical time have influenced young people's process in identity formation.

Some research has also argued that identity formation is more related to the cognitive development of adolescent than their psychosocial development (Berk, 1998, Bee and Boyd, 2002, Shaffer, 2002). Research conducted by Klaczynski et al (1998) indicated that young people with cognitive skills are more likely to achieve their identity statuses than those who have not developed logical thinking. Thus, Marcia's identity formation is not the only result of psychosocial development, but also involves young people's cognitive development.

2.3 Psychosexual development

During the early 20th century, Freud's psychosexual stages became influential and important in explaining an individual's emotional and personality development based on early

childhood experiences (Bukatko and Daelher, 2004). Freud's psychosexual development still dominates the psychosexual development theory although criticisms have been made by many researchers. Some following researchers, such as Jung, developed their own studies based on Freud's theory (Jung, 1992). Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, followed Freud's theories and developed her studies in child psychoanalysis.

Other than Freud's focus on sexuality, Money, Zucker, and Green also studied psychosexual development from the perspective of the medical conditions of individuals, which might also affect young people's psychosexual development. In this section, Freud's psychosexual development stage will be discussed with other researcher's opinions.

2.3.1 Freud's psychosexual development stage on adolescence

Freud, a psychiatrist born in Austria, developed the five stages of psychosexual development to describe the progress of a child growing from a baby into maturity. The five stages are the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, the latency stage and the genital stage (Freud, 2003). Each stage indicates a different degree of psychosexual development, and Freud believed that an individual's further personality development is determined as a result of experiences during those stages. Adolescents are located in the last stage of Freud's theory,

the genital stage, which contains Freud's idea of the libido, and physical growth; these will now be discussed.

Freud's experiences in practice with his patients inspired him in many areas of psychology.

His other important theories include concepts of the unconscious, repression, interpretation of dreams, and the ego and id (Brown, 2004, Salkind, 2004, Freud, 2003). In this study, only Freud's psychosexual development stage related to adolescence will be reviewed.

2.3.1.1 Genital stage and libido

Freud's psychosexual development stages focus on the child's early experiences with parents.

It is believed that early experiences will influence an individual's future personality development (Bee and Boyd, 2002, Berk, 1998, Garcia, 1995, Badcock, 1992). Freud believed that the individual's psychosexual development is completed during adolescence and that the genital stage is the last stage of development.

According to Freud, the genital stage is the time that young people come to puberty. With physical maturation and hormonal secretions, young people begin to have an interest in the opposite sex, and they start to be aware of their own sexual desire. Therefore, the sex drive and desire contribute to young people's future relationships. Besides, young people's

relations with future partners may also be affected by their relationships with parents. The genital stage is affected by the previous stages of Freud's psychosexual development.

Since Freud has indicated that early experiences with parents are important for an individual's psychosexual development, the family has been seen as the prototype of relationships (Roazen, 2000). Therefore, the relationship between parents and children has become the main concept in Freud's development theory. The Oedipus complex is the situation Freud described as the affection that children have towards the parent of the other sex. The Oedipus complex, from an individual's earlier stage, may influence the genital stage in their later development (Roazen, 2000, Badcock, 1992, Jacobs, 1992). Their images of their parents play an important part in the search for partners. Equally, the social and family environment may affect children's affection for parents. Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is controversial; however, there is a need for a loving and caring environment to establish adolescents' relationships in their future life.

Libido is also important during adolescence. As children grow into adolescence, libido is ready to be directed toward an object outside the family. Freud (1977) adapted the term 'libido' to describe instinctive desires and pleasure seeking. Because of their libido, young people start to be aware of their sexual desire and also seek an objective outside the self

(Jacobs, 1992, Freud, 1977, Bee and Boyd, 2002, Garcia, 1995). Freud saw the libido as a force which pushes young people to have the desire to detach from their family and think that this is the way to become independent, and to be adults. With the emergence of sexual drive and affection, young people start searching for someone to whom they can become attached. However, libido might not be the only force changing young people's behaviour. There are many factors contributing to people's behaviours including social and cultural background, as well as family structure, all of which will be discussed later.

During the genital stage, adolescents also face physical growth that leads to body maturation and physical growth is also a factor contributing to psychosexual development.

2.3.1.2 Physical Growth

Physically, the genital stage is the time that psychosexual maturation is achieved (Bee and Boyd, 2002). The rapid growth of height and weight and the appearance of sexual maturation indicate that young people are becoming adults. Due to hormonal secretions, young people's bodies start to experience these rapid changes and maturation, to be ready for future reproduction.

This physical growth has been seen as the most dramatic change in adolescence.

Adolescence starts when the body changes of puberty transform a child's body into an adult one (Berger, 2001, Bee and Boyd, 2002). Biologically speaking, puberty brings hormonal changes that result in young people's body development, being ready for reproduction and increasing their sex drive (Shaffer, 2002, Moore and Rosenthal, 1998, Berger, 2001). Puberty also sends out a signal to the outside world that these people are no longer children and are now physically mature men or women.

Hormonal secretions contribute to physical growth and development in adolescence (Bee and Boyd, 2002). Young people learn about their body growth and how to cope with it. With the physical changes, many different feelings are experienced by young people. Moore and Rosenthal (1998) studied adolescents and stated that young people can fluctuate between being desperate and happy, and feeling confused about self-image and relationships with their family. Also, because of the emerging sexual drive and libido, young people begin to express sexual needs and desire, such as having more social interaction with the opposite sex, more chances to learn about sexual issues and chances to have romantic or sexual relationships. The biological change is one of the factors that contribute to young people's interests in romantic and sexual relationships; it also makes young people re-examine their self-concept and form an adult gender identity from coping with their physical developments.

2.3.1.3 Criticism

Freud's psychosexual development stages have been acknowledged as one of the most important and influential developments in describing the development lifespan; however, Freud's theories have been criticised.

First, Jahoda (1977) a psychologist and a Freudian critic Rieff (1979) have argued that Freud over emphasized the sexuality in the psychosexual stages. In addition to Freud's sex drive factor, psychosexual development can also be affected by other factors such as medical and congenital conditions (Green, 2006, Zucker, 2002, Money, 1994). These studies all examined the factors underlying psychosexual development from an individual's medical state. According to these studies, many aspects of hormonal problems could affect young people's psychosexual development, and this will be discussed in 2.3.3.

Although Erikson, the founder of psychosocial development, was inspired by Freud's theory, he disagreed with Freud and later propounded his own psychosocial theory. First, Erikson addressed the fact that social issues are important in the genital development stage proposed by Freud (Erikson, 1965). The social environment has an influence on individuals. Further, Erikson argued that a person's development is not restricted to childhood; people continue to experience development at various ages in their life (Erikson, 1965, Erikson,

1994). Input from the social environment and development throughout life are the main areas where Erikson criticized Freud's theory.

There are some critics that point to the lack of theoretical support behind Freud's psychosexual development. Erwin (1996, 1997), an expert on Freud and the philosophy of psychotherapy, argued that Freud's theory mainly came from his observation and practice with his patients, and as they were individual cases they may not have been representative of most people's situations. Jung, Freud's student, also argued that Freud's flaw lies in his practice with his patients, again stating that they could not be generalised to the majority (Jung, 1992, Shaffer, 2002, Jung, 1978). Along with Erwin (1997), Jung addressed the limitations of Freud's theories. Observations by Freud could only state the situations of his patients and his theory might not be appropriate in all cases.

Furthermore, Freud's theory may not adapt to different cultures (Berk, 1998). Jung followed Freud's work, but generated his own theory and argued that culture plays a role in psychosexual development (Jung, 1992). Jung argued that Freud's theory emphasized merely the sexual factors (Jung, 1992, Berk, 1998) and he indicated that there are other forces affecting an individual's further personality development.. Although children are given the same nature, different nurturing can contribute to different results in growth. For example,

the culture of the family and the social environment can also affect a child's psychosexual development. In Taiwan, for instance, a study discovered that social interaction plays an important role in young people's psychosexual development other than the sex drive (Sun, 2004). Sun (2004) added that Taiwanese young people become aware of their sex drive while adjusting to their social life; thus, conflicts between environment and nature occur (Sun, 2004). Cultural environments, then, can affect young people's understanding of their sexuality and development.

Cultural differences, the structure of the family or influence from the society may affect adolescent psychosexual development in Taiwan. The family and cultural background that young people grow up with might have different values about people's desire and libido. Honig and Su (1995) conducted research on Taiwanese children, and they stated that culture plays an important role in children's psychosexual development. Children who grow up in a society that values males could influence their psychosexual development. Moreover, family style also influences children. In Taiwan, research has indicated that an intact family and a divorced family both influence children's development (Honig, 1998). Honig (1998) indicated that children growing up in maternal custody have more understanding and awareness than others in intact family and paternal custody. Hence, culture and family style affect an individual's psychosexual development.

2.3.2 Medical perspectives on psychosexual development

Apart from Freud's theories, Zucher, Money, Green and Diamond studied psychosexual development from the medical perspective considering hormonal disorders and the congenital conditions of individuals. Money and Diamond also indicated how social issues play important roles in affecting people's psychosexual development along with medical conditions.

2.3.2.1 Medical conditions

Zucker's psychosexual development mainly focuses on gender identity and the medical condition of individuals. Zucker defined psychosexual development as a controversial combination of both biological and psychological growth (Zucker, 2002). Biological factors such as hormone secretion can affect young people's psychosexual development, and so can medical conditions.

In Zucker's study, gender identity is related to psychosexual development; gender identity is a factor contributing to a person's future psychosexual development. Zucker argued that the process of psychosexual development is a long and complicated journey, and gender identity confusion is seen mostly in children (Zucker, 2002). The confusion could be observed in

childhood; however, the confusion could also exist in other stages of development which are not easily observed.

Moreover, Zucker indicated other influences on young people's psychosexual development, including physical and congenital conditions (Zucker, 2005). For example, people with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, a hormone synthesis disorder, might have different problems with psychosexual development (Zucker et al., 2004).

From their medical background, Money and Green (2006) both researched psychosexual development from different perspectives. Money studied the psychosexual development as it relates to physical intersex condition, which in turn influenced Zucker (2002) and Green (2006). Money believed that an individual's psychosexual development could be affected by a congenital condition. Green, a student of Money, focused on gender identity (Green, 2006). Both Money and Green emphasized medical factors.

2.3.2.2 Social factors

Money and Russo believed that an individual's psychosexual development not only could be influenced by the biological difference but also by the social environment (Money and Russo, 1979). In a later study by Money, parents were still found to be the most influential

models for children's development in psychosexual differentiation. Gender role behaviour and gender identity are different constructs (Money, 1994, Jurgensen et al., 2007)

Like Money and Green, Diamond (2006) also acknowledged the influences of the medical conditions of individuals but identified psychosexual development as 'how does one know if one is male or female'. He sees psychosexual development as young people's image of themselves as boys or girls, and his idea of gender identity also supports Zucker in his research (Zucker, 2005). Diamond stated that psychosexual development has been studied from different aspects; he indicated that an individual's psychosexual development is structured both by biological factors and also social environment (Diamond, 2006). Family, society, culture and physical growth all contribute to young people's psychosexual development (Diamond, 2006). Therefore, it is not only the medical condition that may be part of the reason for the psychosexual development described by Money and Green, as Diamond also recognised social factors (Diamond, 2006). Diamond has summarised Money, Green and his own ideas and indicated various factors contributing to psychosexual development.

In all, Freud's psychosexual development theory may be too narrow, for the following reasons: lack of theoretical background, cultural consideration, and limited patient

observation. Further, a person's psychosexual development may be discussed from other perspectives, for instance, a medical condition. Zucker, Money, Green and Diamond have contributed to the theory with their work on hormonal disorder, congenital condition and other medical issues.

2.4 Cognitive Development

This section will explore the cognitive aspect of human development and how this may influence young people. Cognitive developments in adolescence increase young people's thinking and reasoning ability. Piaget's cognitive theory (1969) is recognised as the most influential theory. Information-processing theory, expanded from Piaget's theory, has adapted a computing mode for cognitive development. Vygotsky's sociocultural development has indicated the importance of culture in cognitive development. In this section, Piaget's cognitive development, information-processing theory, and Vygotsky's sociocultural development will be discussed and reviewed.

2.4.1 Definitions

Cognitive theories have been defined as theories that study the mental processes in development, such as logic and memory (Bee and Boyd, 2002). Cognition is the mental process whereby people think and learn. Therefore, cognitive development theories suggest

that the individual learns from their senses and touch in childhood and later this includes how he or she interacts with the world.

2.4.2 Intelligence

2.4.2.1 Piaget's Cognitive Development in Adolescence

Piaget's cognitive theory appears to be one of the most recognised theories underlying children's cognitive development; it appears in every text book on cognitive development. Based on his biology background, Piaget indicated that learning as a basic process helps the individual to adapt in the environment (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, Shaffer, 2002). Piaget (1999) applied scheme, assimilation, accommodation and equilibration to explain the process of cognitive growth and development: 'scheme' is defined as the cognitive structure in which people organize their behaviour and adapt to the environment. People's schemes change as they grow up. The modification of information that individuals receive is called 'assimilation'; the 'accommodation' is the modification of internal schemes to fit the environment. 'Equilibration' means that people's cognitive structure and environment have reached a balanced situation. Piaget (1969) believed that people experience the progress of assimilation and accommodation to adapt in the environment throughout their lives.

Piaget (1969) proposed four stages of cognitive development from birth to adolescence: the sensory-motor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete-operational stage, and the formal-operational stage. Each stage indicates the different schemes children build and the ability they will have. Children will acquire an abstract thinking ability through completing tasks at earlier stages. Adolescents are located in the formal-operational stage, which is the last one in Piaget's cognitive development; thus, it can be assumed that young people's cognitive development is completed during adolescence.

2.4.2.1.1 Piaget's Formal Operation Stage

Adolescents, located in the formal-operational stage in Piaget's theory, develop rational, logical, systematic and abstract thinking, compared with the young people engaged in concrete-operational stage (Shaffer, 2002, Miller, 1993, Piaget, 1999, Sutherland, 1992, Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Before children reach the formal-operational stage, they are able to search for an answer by using concrete-operational skills that directly relate to the objects. As children grow up, they start to organise possible solutions and work on their progress to determine the final answer. Furthermore, young people begin to reason and form a hypothesis.

Table 2.2 shows that young people begin to think in a systematic and logical way. Adolescents start to generate hypotheses and accept abstract concepts rather than concrete objects. The procedure of thinking becomes more interesting than the final answer for young people. With their ability to think and reason, young people are able to structure a conclusion from the facts. This thinking ability leads to the development of hypothetical-deductive thought.

Table 2-2 Piaget's Cognitive Stage (Shaffer, 2002)

Approximate age	Stage	Primary schemes or methods of representing experience	Major development
11 years and beyond	Formal Operations	Adolescents' cognitive operations are reorganized in a way that permits them to operate on operations (think about thinking). Thought is now systematic and abstract.	Logical thinking is no longer limited to the concrete or the observable. Adolescents enjoy pondering hypothetical issues and, as a result, may become rather idealistic. They are capable of systematic, deductive reasoning and that permits them to consider many possible solutions to a problem and to pick the correct answer.

Moreover, Piaget (1969) indicated that the stages occur in the same order for all children, but also that individual difference should be considered. For example, genetic and environmental factors affect the timing of progression from one stage to another, so that the age presented in the stages is roughly estimated (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999). Some children might develop later than others, but others will experience the same development. Therefore, the stages are in a fixed order that individuals experience at similar ages to their peers.

According to Piaget (1969), young people at the formal-operational stage are gaining three abilities: hypotheses, reasoning, and proposition. With the ability to operate on problems and to hypothesise, adolescents start to question their own beliefs and values. Searching their identity requires the ability to think and reason in an abstract fashion, and young people can also consider their role in the formation of a hypotheses. From experiments, Piaget (1969) discovered that young people could generally form a hypothesis, vary the different factors, and use test to prove it; they can also discover the relationships between different factors. Therefore, developing reasoning skills can help young people to form a stable identity (Shaffer, 2002, Klaczynski et al., 1998). At this stage, young people start to imagine and dream about the possibilities in their future using their ability to manage abstract concepts, and they are also capable of experimenting with their ideas and with various roles.

Accordingly, as discussed in Section 2.2 abstract thinking contributes to young people's identity search.

Conflict between parents and young people may be a result of young people's thinking ability. As their thinking becomes more logical and hypothetical, young people might start to question parental authority and feel confused about their hypothesis and the real world. Lee (2003) argued that Taiwanese young people with the ability to reason are able to state their own ideas and their parents' ideas are no longer ones with which they have to agree (Lee, 2003). At this stage, many arguments happen when young people and parents discuss their future career or academic development. The conflict is also related to the search for an occupational choice.

Furman and Simon (1999) studied representational thinking and romantic relationships in adolescence. Since young people have developed the ability think hypothetically they like to experiment with different roles in life, and this can affect their opinions about relationships. Romantic relationships offer a new opportunity for young people to behave and interact in the position of romantic partner. Cognitive development gives adolescents chances to reason, think and reflect on relationships.

Piaget's cognitive development theory proposes the process by which individuals develop cognitively. However, it may be too simplistic merely to describe people's cognition, as there are other issues which need consideration, and these will be presented in 2.4.2.1.3.

2.4.2.1.2 The Neo-Piagetian Theories

Many researchers explored Piaget's theory and then expounded their own theories; such theories are known as neo-Piagetian theories. These theories are based on Piaget's theory but further explain development as a process going through many stages and tasks (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999, Jones et al., 1997). Since Piaget's development stages have been criticized, neo-Piagetian theories addressed those criticism, and this in turn has lead to further discussion. Case et al. (1988) emphasized that young people's emotions, experiences, and their ability to deal with their emotions, influence their cognitive development. Case (1998) argued that emotion is considered to be the mechanism through which the child reacts to the learning in the environments he/she is in. Thus people's emotion is associated with their learning process. Moreover, neo-Piagetian addressed the issue that when children are progressing to a new stage in cognitive development, their intelligence and the experiences or training they have undergone may benefit their development. For example, children who have seen others' behaviour might find it easy to follow their actions; gifted children are also able to deal with more difficult problems than other children.

Dealing with a complex task is the achievement that young people learn in the course of their cognitive development. Case (1988), following Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, suggested that young people are able to manage increasing numbers of elements in a problem when they have more developed cognitive ability (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999, Case et al., 1988). For instance, in mathematics, adolescents deal with algebra while younger children are only be able to perform simpler operations.

Furthermore, Case et al. (1988) and Okamoto et al. (2006) all indicated that working memory capacity is another influential factor in children's cognitive development (Okamoto et al., 2006, Case et al., 1988). Children initially rely on their working memory to support their learning. As they age, however, working memory becomes less important, and their social and environmental situation becomes more influential. Young people start to interact within their context, and build up their knowledge. Case (1988) later summarised memory capacity, as well as the social context and environment, as being factors which dominate children and young people's cognitive learning development.

2.4.2.1.3 Criticism

One important challenge to Piaget's cognitive theory is the limited attention which has been given to social and cultural influences (Shaffer, 2002, Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget believed children learn from their own exploration but Vygotsky's sociocultural theory advocated that children's learning may be affected by their social and cultural contexts. Social interaction matters to cognitive growth. Intelligence is not the only factor to determinate people's cognitive development but various social and cultural contexts also affect the structure of children's learning. Children may develop differently with influences from parents, teachers, and peers. Vygotsky's sociocultural development will be discussed in 2.4.3.

Secondly, a follow researcher of Piaget's added that some other factors such as experience and training can influence the success of children with their tasks in the stages (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999). Piaget (1969) believed that it is children's reasoning ability which dominates their ability to perform cognitive tasks in the various stages. However, there are other factors that could influence children's ability to resolve tasks, such as memory, experience, and verbal understanding (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999, Okamoto et al., 2006, Case et al., 1988). For example, in a learning context, children who have more experiences or training may achieve different results from those who have less. Neo-Piagetian theories have provided further discussion in this area (see 2.4.1.2). Moreover, language limitation is

also an issue as children might have various interpretations and understanding of the wording of the tasks. Therefore, language is seen as an important factor in cognitive development.

Thirdly, Piaget's cognitive development stages are criticized for being in a fixed order and irreversible (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999). Piaget (1969) believed that the stages occur in a fixed order, and young children progress to a new stage when they have completed the tasks in the previous stage, and then the sequence is discontinued. However, researchers following Piaget's theory have suggested that the occurrence of the stages might not be in the sequence that Piaget proposed. Neo-Piagetians, such as Case (1988), suggested that there should be more flexibility in progress across the stages in cognitive development. They argued that the development stages occur in a continuous sequence (Lutz and Sternberg, 1999, Case, 1974). Piaget viewed the development as logical, while some theorists believe that cognitive development is a very complex process, for which children need skills in many different areas. Cognitive developments in different areas might not be at the same stage. For example, some people may perform well in verbal reasoning but may be at a lower level in mathematic problems.

Moreover, Piaget did not explain the consequences for children if they do not achieve the tasks in the cognitive development stages. Miller (1993) noted a flaw in Piaget's

development stages, suggesting that they are incomplete and that there is no evidence of unsuccessful development in these stages. There is no explanation about what crisis a child might face when he/she fails to complete the task in a cognitive development stage. No answer can be found as to whether the failure would affect the individual's further development or not. Thus, Piaget's cognitive stages are provided without full explanations.

Although Piaget's theory is still the central one, cognitive development in Taiwan might be different from that predicted by Piaget. First, Han (2000) argued that people's cognitive development might not proceed in these stages. Interruption in schooling could affect young people's development in thinking and reasoning. For example, those adults who had lost the opportunity for schooling might not be able to develop a hypothesis in the same way as an adolescent who is in education. In other words, these adults are not able to operate the abstract thinking that Piaget indicated in the formal-operational stage of adolescence. Han (2000) believed that schooling is still an important factor through which young people develop their cognitive thinking skills (Han, 2000).

Secondly, children's cognitive development involves various factors other than biological intelligence. A study conducted in Taiwan showed that although young people are able to think in a systematic and abstract manner, there is still a difference between boys and girls in

learning (Liao, 2005). Liao (2005) found that girls and boys experience language and literature learning differently, and that gender may produce cognitive learning differences. However, another study of children's ability in deductive reasoning showed that Taiwanese children gain their reasoning ability with the increase in age and that gender does not have a significant influence (Chang, 2003). Chang's study indicated that different residential areas might have different influences on children's cognitive development. Children from city areas performed better in deductive reasoning than children from country areas (Chang, 2003). Therefore, Chang's result indicates that cognitive development not only stems from a child's own development; the environment also provides information that sharpens children's cognitive development. This result reflected Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasized the importance of interaction within the social context. To sum up, intelligence is only one of the factors affecting young people's cognitive development. There are many other issues such as gender and environment which should be considered.

2.4.2.2 Information-Processing Theory

Information-processing theory is recognised as a new theory which has adapted the concept from computing in cognitive development by studying how people's minds manage information (Bee and Boyd, 2002, Shaffer, 2002, McCorduck, 1979).

Information-processing theory focuses on how people's minds manage information; it sees

people's minds as computer-like systems which operate upon the information put into them.

In order to study human development in a scientific way, Simon (1962) indicated the importance of researching complex human cognitive processing, and then proposed the approach of the adapted computing concept in studying cognitive learning. Klahr and MacWhinney (1998) stated that this computing-system model was based on the tasks in Piaget's cognitive development stages (Klahr and MacWhinney, 1998). Since Piaget's stages are now seen argued as inflexible and fixed, information-processing theories aim to describe the changes in the tasks. Moreover, Shaffer (2002) explained that information-processing theory suggests that cognitive development is gradual, which is different from the stages in Piaget's cognitive development theory.

Figure 2-2 explains the mode of information-processing theory. According to this information-processing theory, human minds function like a computer with the processing of input and output (Shaffer, 2002). Gelman (1978) explained that information-processing and problem-solving are the main tasks for children to learn. Input comes from the information people receive; after processing the data, answers and solutions to the problem are the output. First, the input comes in the sensory register; the information is selected and put into working memory. If the information is to be remembered permanently, it will be stored in long-term

memory. If the information is not to be remembered, it will be discarded. For example, when children hear a sound (input) and they recognise it as a word, the word will move into the short-term memory. The knowledge and meaning of the word is stored in the long-term memory. The control processes are an organised method of coding and processing the information. If the information is not to be remembered and processed, it will be discarded.

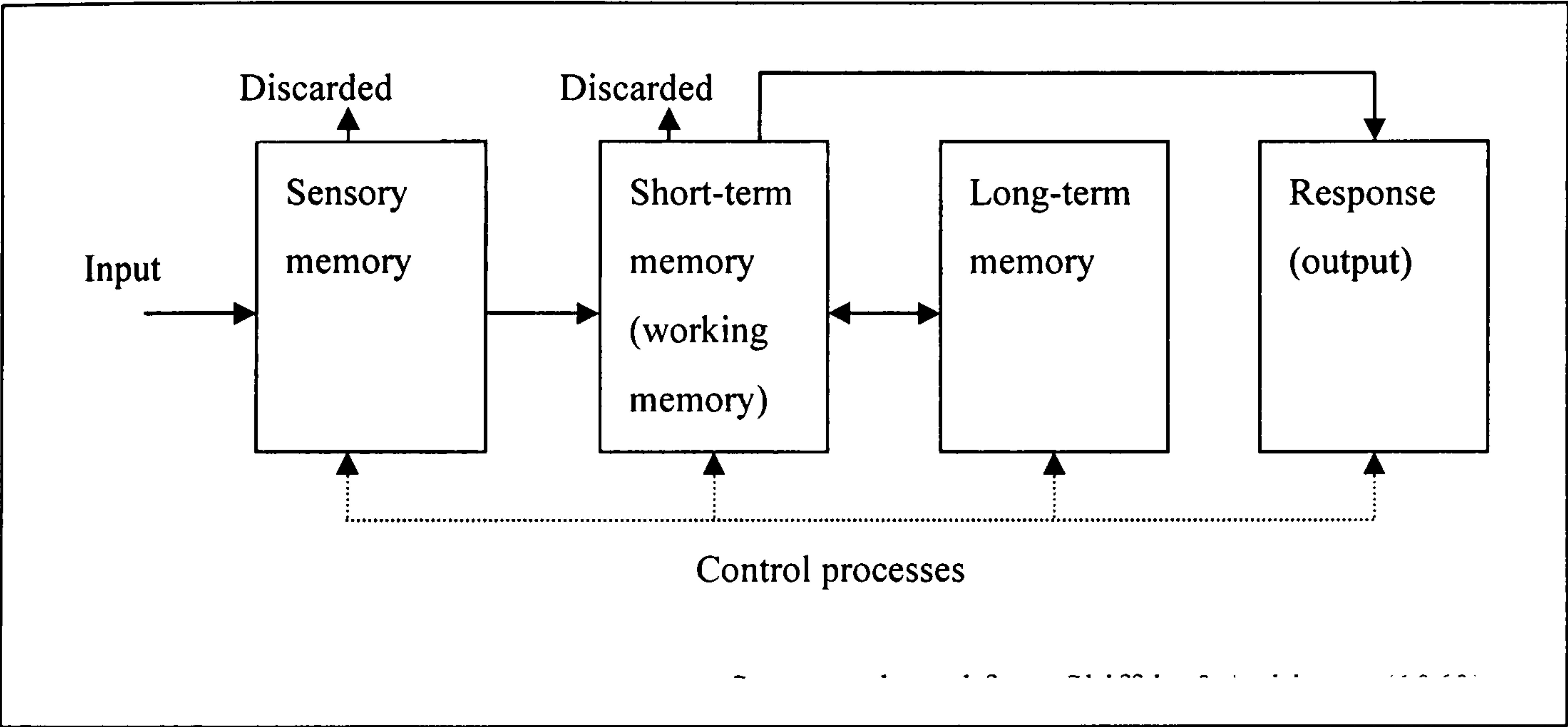


Figure 2-2 Information-processing (Shaffer, 2002)

Like Piaget, information-processing theory acknowledges that biological maturation is an important influence on cognitive development (Shaffer, 2002). Therefore, both Piaget and information-processing theory state that intellectual development is affected by biological factors and the environment where a child grows up. Once the biological maturation has

been achieved, people are able to process more complex information.

Adolescents are believed to process information faster and more efficiently compared when with younger children (Kail, 1997). They also use different strategies to remember more complex things. In all, information-processing modes are developed from childhood, and maintain stability from adulthood to old age. With this processing ability, young people are able to manage many elements in the tasks, and are also capable of dealing with complex questions.

2.4.3 Social culture influences

2.4.3.1 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky, a Russian developmental psychologist, created a sociocultural theory to challenge Piaget's cognitive development theory. In Vygotsky's view (1978), Piaget focuses on biological maturation in cognitive development and does not acknowledge the importance of social and cultural influences on children. Vygotsky viewed children's cognitive development from a different perspective; the interactions between changing social conditions could also shape young people's cognitive learning (Vygotsky, 1978, Vygotsky, 1996). The role of environmental and social interaction should be emphasized. Two of Vygotsky's most important theories, internalisation and zone of proximal development, will

be discussed.

Vygotsky defined internalization as the internal reconstruction of an external operation (Vygotsky, 1978), and stated that people receive information from outside, and the information becomes knowledge through internalization and that is the progress of cognitive development. Thus, internalization is the process by which people absorb the information and transformation. For example, children could internalize the information they receive from the context, such as conversation with parents. It can be assumed that children's early interaction with parents could facilitate children's cognitive learning.

Zone of proximal development is another important theory that Vygotsky developed (Vygotsky, 1978). It indicated the latent capacity that children might not be able to manage by themselves but can achieve the task with help from adults or skilled peers. This idea differed from Piaget's cognitive development theory, which states that cognitive development is individual, as Vygotsky (1978) believed that young people are able to advance themselves in complex tasks with help from peers and adults. Therefore, children's interaction with parents or peer can facilitate their learning. Within the zone of proximal development, children have the potential to achieve some difficult tasks. Accordingly, the zone of proximal development has become an important issue around which educators can organize

lessons. Children's potential may be inspired and learning can be advanced when the zone of proximal development has been considered in education.

Environment and social interaction are the inputs that stimulate young people. Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning could be structured from cooperation and interaction with peers in the social context.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has been widely applied in research in Taiwan. First, Vygotsky's focus on social interaction is studied as an important factor in human development (Lai, 2003). Lai (2003) argued that both nature and social factors have influences on individuals; and human behaviour is distinguished by its social interaction. Secondly, interaction among peers has been studied to facilitate young people's learning. Wang (2001) explained that peer evaluation is one form of peer interaction which could benefit young people; for example, conversation and feedback from peers may boost young people's learning progress. The scaffolding structured by peers offers learners opportunities to reflect.

To sum up, the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, and information-processing theory, all indicate that young people are able to manage more complex questions. This ability helps

young people in their search for an identity, their thinking about their relations with their family, and their roles in romantic relationships. Reasoning about their role in the social context and hypothesising about the consequences of romantic relationships are the result of adolescent cognitive development. With this cognitive development, young people approach adulthood with more developed learning and thinking abilities.

2.5 Summary

To sum up, young people experience dramatic changes during adolescence. Psychosocial, psychosexual and cognitive development all contribute to turning young people into adults.

Erikson's psychosocial development has been acknowledged as an important guide for research into adolescent development. Marcia extended Erikson's identity crisis theory to the identity formation paradigm.

In theory, the search for an identity and the peer group become the most important issues for youth. Identity formation is associated with healthy personal development because difficulties in searching for an identity may cause role confusion in young people. The process of identity formation and the society of peers offer young people opportunities to question and reflect. In adolescence, young people are getting to know themselves, and

setting up their identity in the social world; this is also the critical period in which peers have a place in influencing adolescents' life.

Adolescence is the period when children turn into adults. Challenges in physical and mental development are essential for young people to experience, so that adolescence has been seen as a crucial time for development. Body changes, hormone control and sex drive influence young people's physical development, while cognitive and psychosocial growth also enable them to think and behave differently. Tackling the crisis and progressing into adulthood may be difficult. Both physical and mental development lead to young people's interests in romantic relationships; romantic relationships are a new and exciting area. With a greater understanding of the young people's situation, there will be more opportunities to improve the services provided for them and to promote their more fulfilled development.

Chapter 3 : Literature review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the literature in the area of peer influence, romantic relationships, and the counselling service in Taiwan.

First, the importance of peer influences will be presented. The term peer has emerged in relation to adolescent social life along with romantic relationships, as discussed in the previous chapter. Many research studies have acknowledged the power of peer influences on adolescents (Henry et al., 2007, Gardner and Steinberg, 2005, Clasen and Brown, 1985). Adolescents' self-esteem may be promoted by peer support, or, on the other hand, more negative influences such as aggression and delinquency may be the result; both the positive and negative aspects of peer influence will be discussed in this chapter. According to Erwin (1993) and Umana-Taylor and Bamaca-Gomez (2003), young people's mental health and behaviour patterns are closely related to their peers. Peer influence in Taiwan will also be presented.

Secondly, the literature on young people's romantic relationships will be explored and the meaning of romantic relationships examined. Romantic relationships bring both positive and negative influences on young people in all aspects of their development (Kaltiala-Heino

et al., 2003, Moore and Rosenthal, 1998, Furman and Wehner, 1994). Furthermore, culture plays an important role in shaping young people's view of romantic relationships (Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde, 2007, Endo et al., 2000, Goodwin and Tang, 1991).

Finally, the notion of counselling, both its theory and practice, will be explored, beginning with counselling generally, then Taiwan specifically, ending with the on campus counselling services in Taiwan. This study aims to explore counselling as an intervention in preventing or addressing teenage pregnancy in Taiwan; therefore, this chapter will include a discussion of the literature in this field.

3.2 Peer influences

3.2.1 Definition of Peer

In Oetting and Beauvais's peer cluster theory (1986), peer is identified as small subsets of groups, including pairs, who share their behaviour, belief and values (Oetting and Beauvais, 1986). Peers are the persons who gather together and have similar opinions and behaviour.

In Oetting and Beauvais's peer cluster theory, the same behaviour is mostly seen in such groups.

For adolescents, peer refers to the persons of a similar age with similar interests, who

communicate well with each other, and also spend a great deal of time together (Cotterell, 2007, Erwin, 1993). Young people like to gather together and share similar opinions; such crowds form peer groups. Thus, peers are the persons sharing the same status with adolescents; they are about the same age and are experiencing the same developments during adolescence. Therefore, as Cotterell (2007) explained, young people find it easy to communicate with their peers due to their shared status.

In Taiwan, peers are defined as a group of people in a similar developmental situation, with the same status, and with shared similar behaviours, so that members of such a group have loyalty and a sense of belonging to the group (Liu, 2005). In adolescence, peers are the persons young people spend time with and interact with.

Young people like to get together as a group; such a peer group is the social structure formed by adolescents (Cotterell, 2007). Peer groups have an established, sound and strong sense of being loyalty and belonging that young people like to follow. Young people like to engage in activities with peer group members. Collectivism can be seen in young people's peer groups (Cotterell, 2007, Le and Stockdale, 2005). Collectivism refers to the awareness an individual has that is bound within social roles and social relationships (Le and Stockdale, 2005). For adolescents, collectivism is usually linked to peer affiliation where similarity

directs the following in the group. Collectivism could explain the behaviour pattern which can be seen in young people because they like to “hang out” together and do the same things.

During adolescence, young people are establishing their identity and becoming individuals.

Young people could have expectations from groups used to collectivism; they are also eager to be independent individuals. Thus, the conflict between personal decisions and peer expectations are the tasks to which young people are learning to adjust (Brown, 1999).

In Brown and Clasen’s (1985) research on adolescence, peer influence includes peer pressure, peer popularity, and conformity. The influence includes pressure from others and adolescents’ desire to be part of the group. Being popular and being accepted by friends is important for young people, as is being comfortable with friends. Therefore, both spontaneous and non-spontaneous behaviours could be boosted by those influences. A peer influence exists in various forms and has various results. The following section will discuss peer influences and adolescents.

3.2.2 Peer Influences on Adolescents

Erikson’s (1994) psychosocial development indicated the important role that peers play during adolescence, and that they are recognised as a form of support in while young people

are searching for an identity. During adolescence, peer relationships occupy a major part of adolescents' lives. As peers are undergoing the same developmental experiences and are at the same stage, other young people feel easy and comfortable about sharing their opinions with each other.

Since adolescents want to be popular and accepted by their peers, advice and suggestions from peers are usually taken. It can be seen that many young people pursue a similar fashion style and care about their body image. Black (2002) has described how some students look and sound the same due to such influence. Since style is a common topic that young people share and discuss with peers (Halpern et al., 2005), these similar outfits could be explained by peer suggestion and influence. Therefore, a peer's words and behaviour are mostly taken and received by young people. In such a way, young people's attitude and behaviour is affected by peers.

In Kaplan et al's (1984) research into adolescent drug use, peer influence is described as where an individual associates with peers and engages in certain activities (Kaplan et al., 1984). Adolescents learn and receive various messages from peers including behaviours and thoughts. These influences happen when ideas stay in young people's minds and they act or think the same.

A great deal of research has suggested that peer influence is responsible for young people's behaviour (Feiring et al., 2002, Meeus et al., 2002, Berger, 2001, Polce-Lynch et al., 2001, Brown, 1999, Cotterell, 1996, Lingren, 1995, Erwin, 1993, Kandel, 1978). Tartar (2001) also indicated that adolescents are ready to do nearly anything to be accepted by their peers and maintain their status among peers. Therefore, behaviour is usually be seen as being affected by peers (Bednar and Fisher, 2003). Other research has focused on delinquency among peers; nevertheless, there are still some positive influences young people receive from peers. Both positive and negative influences from peers will be discussed later in 3.2.4.

However, peer influence is not as powerful as some studies suggest (Black, 2002, Lingren, 1995). Although young people receive information and suggestions from peers, they are still autonomous individuals who are responsible for themselves. Black (2002) suggested that cognitive development has given young people the ability to reason and hypothesise, so that they are able to think before following their peers' behaviour. Cognitive and reasoning ability is also the reason that young people can think about their roles in romantic relationships. According to Shaffer (2002) and Jessor and Jessor (1997), being able to experience different roles, such as being a member of a group or being an individual, is one of the developmental tasks of adolescence.

In fact, although peer influences are seen as powerful to young people, there are other factors which explain young people's behaviour. For example, family, society, and media have an influence (Ashcraft, 2003, Moore, 2000, Burge et al., 1997). The expectations of family and society can also shape young people's opinions and behaviour. The media also presents different materials which stimulate young people. Therefore, there are many factors which contribute to young people's behaviour patterns, and the peer group is only one of many influences.

3.2.3 Peer Influences and Romantic Relationships

While peers are important for young people's social life, adolescents also start to have interests in the opposite sex and become aware of their sex drive, according to Freud's (1977) psychosexual development as stated in 2.3. Therefore, this is the time that young people experience the urge to engage in romantic relationships and to be attached to someone. Peers are the persons young people like to talk to and with whom they share their romantic relationships. With the information and support provided by peers, young people listen to their friends and are influenced in their romantic relationships.

Peers could help young people's romantic relationships. First, peers offer opportunities for

adolescents to engage in social activities and to know the opposite sex. Adolescents start to spend time being with friends, and these same-sex groups expand into mixed-sex groups. Lingren (1995) pointed out that young people like to become involved in informal social events in mixed-gender groups. These social activities are also a medium through which young people become acquainted with the opposite sex. Mixed-gender social events help to develop friendships and also affect young people's further heterosexual interaction. Some romantic relationships are formed from certain social activities, and friends become matchmakers.

Since young people trust and like to talk to their peers about many issues, including sexual and romantic relationships, information and expectations are passed among peers. Feiring (1996) and Feiring et al. (2002) have indicated that best friends do have an influence upon newly formed romantic relationships. While young people learn to manage their romantic relationships, their close friends provide them with information and personal experiences that can be a guide or lesson for them. Due to the strong sense of belonging and loyalty, young people often take peers' advice and this can result in relationship and sexual problems.

Moreover, Shaffer (2002), Moore (2000), and Feiring et al. (2002) have suggested that friends are important in their relationship dealings. Adolescents have the chance to talk

about gender difference and experience being with peers of the opposite sex. For example, female friends can offer a different view so that boys develop a better understanding about girls' thinking. Therefore, friends' suggestion and advice help adolescents in managing their romantic relationships.

Peer relationships in adolescence are associated with romantic relationships. Research suggests that the relation young people have with their peers can be influential to their romantic relationships (Connolly et al., 2000, Collins and Laursen, 2004, Furman and Wehner, 1997). Young people learn to get along with peer friends, and their interaction helps them to move into their romantic relationships. Young people who manage their romantic relationships well are usually popular with their peers. The interaction and social context in peer relations help young people to manage their romantic relationships.

Although peers encourage and support young people's romantic relationships, there are still doubts about the information young people pass among their peers. According to Winn (1995) and Vitagliano (2003), peer may pass inaccurate information and this may have a negative influence on young people. The negative influences of romantic relationships will be discussed in 3.3.3.

In all, peer influence is recognized as one of the factors related to young people's relationships and sexual behaviour. In terms of romantic relationships, peers play the role of a mediator who encourages, advises and interferes in young people's romantic relationships. Moreover, peer relations also provide a guideline for young people to adjust their romantic relationships. Romantic relationships will be discussed in 3.3.

3.2.4 Positive and Negative Influences of Peers

Peers have different influences on adolescents, and several studies have suggested that this is an area which needs further investigation (Erwin, 1993, Umana-Taylor and Bamaca-Gomez, 2003). In this section, both the positive and negative influences from peers will be discussed.

3.2.4.1 Positive Peer Influences

Peer may have a positive influence on and provide support for young people. First, Tuner (1999), and Clasen and Brown (1985) have suggested that peer support could contribute to young people's self-esteem and identity searching. Through the encouragement and support from their friends, young people may build up their self-awareness and self-respect. Having more understanding of self and having supportive company can help adolescents establish their identity.

Secondly, peer activities can provide opportunities for young people to learn to organise and cooperate with others, and young people's social skills therefore benefit. Team work gives adolescents the chance to work with peers. Lai (2003) explained that such activities, for example Boy Scout activities or being a group monitor in class, can improve adolescents' social behaviour and sense of responsibility. Young people learn to help each other and work as a group. Thus, young people's social behaviours and personal development are the positive outcome of peer activities.

Moreover, interaction among peer members also benefits young people in future personal relationships, including romantic relationships (Feiring, 1996). Young people who have a positive interaction with peers are more likely to manage their romantic relationships well. Interaction with peer friends provides a chance for adolescents to get along and relate to people outside the family. Therefore, young people's personal relationships can be promoted from positive peer interaction.

However, although peers can benefit adolescents they can also affect them in negative ways. These negative influences will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.4.2 Negative Peer Influences

Negative peer influences have been recognised as the main force causing young people's delinquent behaviour. Delinquent behaviour is affected by peers (Henry et al., 2007, Barnes et al., 2007, Arbeau et al., 2007, Gardner and Steinberg, 2005, Hahm et al., 2004, Oetting and Beauvais, 1986). The peer cluster theory proposed by Oetting and Beauvais (1986) indicated that young people who experience troubles tend to gang together and form peer groups (Hahm et al., 2004); drug taking and drinking problems are frequently seen in such peer groups. Drinking, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviour are known results of peer pressure among young people. Young people are likely to become involved in such activities when their peers have delinquent behaviour. For example, adolescents are influenced to drink when their peers do so.

Gender is another negative factor of peer influence. Abusive behaviour, mostly from boys to girls, is part of peer culture which stresses power (Lacasse and Mendelson, 2007, Leach, 2003). Besides bullying, Barnes's (2007) research suggested that negative peer influences in sexual activity is stronger for boys than girls. Boys are under stronger peer influences with regard to sexual activity. Once the boy is pushed by his peers into having sexual activity, he is likely to follow his peer's advice (Barnes et al., 2007).

However, it is not only being involved with a deviant peer group which may contribute to delinquent behavioural problems, but also being rejected by the group can result in a negative influence. Kiesner et al (2002) and Miller-Johnson et al (2004) have suggested that peer rejection is recognised as a factor for young people's aggressive behaviour problems. Since young people care about their status and popularity, being rejected by their peers might provoke an emotional reaction. Alienation and withdrawal are factors affecting young people's mental health. Therefore, involvement in peer activity and being left outside the group could both cause mental and social behaviour problems in young people.

During my experience as a teacher, I have observed that bullying, truancy, having tattoos and smoking are very common peer influences. Young people gang together and do things together, and other young people might be motivated to join in the group for the peer status; often specific behaviours are expected from new members.

3.2.5 Peer influences on Taiwanese Adolescents

Peer influence is recognised as a powerful force during adolescence in Taiwan (Cernada et al., 1986, Hsin, 2003, Wang et al., 2003). Behavioural problems are mostly provoked by peers. Hsin (2003) noted that Taiwanese young people find it easier to talk to their peer friends than teachers or parents. When they have an issue about social relationships, friends are the

persons to talk to.

Research studies in Taiwan have focused on delinquent behaviours including smoking, drug taking or risky sexual behaviour. For example, a study by Chang (2004) has pointed out that peer behaviour has a great influence on adolescents' drinking, smoking, and betel-nut use, all of which have negative influences on their health. Yang et al. (1998) reported that when their friends are involved in these behaviours, such as smoking, young people are most likely to be influenced and become smokers. In addition, teenage girls may develop eating problems due to peer influence regarding weight (Lee, 2005). For example, young girls are afraid to be teased by their friends about their figures and try to control their diet. Figure and diet have become a competition among peers. Therefore, the message these young people receive from their friends could have a very powerful effect on adolescents' lives and health.

Other than this delinquent behaviour, peers have various influences on Taiwanese adolescents. It is commonly observed that young people like to dress similarly to state that they belong to the group. Lai (2003) explained that young people are affected by peers in their fashion and social relations with others. When it comes to social relations, peers are always the first person that young people go to for a talk. Problems with friends or boy/girlfriends are

common topics in adolescents' conversation with peers.

Peer influence also plays an important role in Taiwanese young people's sexual relationships (Wang and Cheng, 2001). In the research conducted by Wang and Cheng (2001), different peer influences on young people were found, and peers were also the objects that young people liked to talk to on matters relating to sex and relationships. Information and knowledge were passed in peer groups because young people were reluctant to consult adults.

Many research studies conducted in Taiwan have focused on delinquent behaviour influenced by peers. However, there is little evidence to show that peers could have positive influences on Taiwanese adolescents. Recent research has focused on what peers have done wrong to young people but ignored positive influence. The advantage of peer influences should be emphasized since young people can benefit from positive peer relations.

3.3 Romantic Relationships

3.3.1 Definition of Romantic Relationships

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people have a need for love and belonging after meeting physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1987). People have a desire to belong to a group, such as a club, peer or religious group, and they are also eager to be needed and loved.

Although the meaning of romantic relationships varies in accordance with different cultures, age, and backgrounds, most young people have their first awareness of romantic relationships during adolescence (Brown et al., 1999). Young people are becoming interested in the opposite sex and are aware of their desire to attach to someone they fancy. The feeling of love has emerged in young people's social life.

There are various definitions about romantic relationships. In Feiring's (1996) study of the concepts of adolescent romance, the definition of romantic relationships for adolescents is described as casual and brief, but also intense. Romantic relationships are also defined as a relationship with association and interaction between two individuals that have some attraction to and passion for each other (Brown et al., 1999). Adolescents' behaviour in romantic relationships can also be seen as a partial result of biological change, and as preparation for future romantic and sexual relationships (Hearn et al., 2003, Larson et al., 1999). More mature body growth and hormonal changes make young people start to think about romance. Engaging in a romantic relationship also brings young people the status of being grown up.

Other than family and peers, relationships with romantic partners start to occupy part of young people's living needs. Nelson-Jones (1990) stated that people have a need in the

relationships to both receive, and give, love to a special person. Love can bring people happiness and intimacy, and improve their sense of well-being. A healthy relationship is a mutual interaction between persons that people learn to love and to be loved by each other.

3.3.2 Romantic Relationships and Adolescents

Adolescent love has been discussed even before Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Furman and Wehner, 1994). It is well known that an experience of passionate love in romantic relationships can become the most important and intense thing in young people's life. Adolescence is a stage at which they learn to express their love and desire, so it is important for the young to establish healthy relationships with intimate partners.

The ideas of love and romance are popular with young people, and they are eager to experience the feelings of being in romantic relationships. First, young people might have a crush on some heroic person or idol, and then move forward to find someone as a real objective with whom they can share their feelings and learn to express their affections (Moore and Rosenthal, 1998). Company and support are needed in adolescent romantic relationships. Love, care and affection are the motivations which encourage them to engage in romantic relationships.

Both peer and romantic relationships are important for young people, and they learn to manage both relationships. It has been reported that many adolescents desire romantic relationships (Diamond et al., 1999, Sorensen, 2007). Being involved in romantic relationships gives them the grown up status that young people desire. In the meantime, peers are also an important social agent for young people. Peers are believed to be important in adolescents' romantic relationships. For adolescents, peers provide guidance and inspiration, as well as the social context for romantic relationships (Brown, 1999, Furman, 2002). Young people obtain advice and encouragement from peers in relations to romantic relationships and fantasy. The peer network is one of the resources through which young people have the opportunity to participate in romantic relationships; however, some have argued that spending time and energy in romantic relationships might also destroy the friendship network. Friends might feel left behind and lonely when one takes his/her time from friends to boy/girlfriends. The feeling that young people have to manage both romantic relationships and friendships could be difficult. Thus, young people's interpersonal relationships skills are to be expanded and improved.

Peers help to broaden young people's social world, and introduce opposite gender friends.

Brown (1999) reported that the mixed gender groups can help to structure the early forms of romantic relationships through which young people have the chance to meet people and

interact with them. Young people may find someone attractive in such social events and begin romantic relationships. Meanwhile, having mixed gender friends not only promotes adolescents' romantic relationships, but also provides information and suggestions for friends (Connolly et al., 1999).

Young people have limited accurate information resources about romantic and sexual relationships. In Montgomery and Sorell's research (1998), young people showed no possibility of a full understanding of love. Unfortunately, there has been limited research into how free young people feel to learn about romantic relationships from an educational environment (Moore, 2000, Albert et al., 2003). Young people have to search other resources for information and knowledge about romantic relationships; the resources include friends' conversations, family observation, and the media. Although cinema and television have provided cultural meanings of love and romance, the materials have been criticized for their appropriateness and accuracy (Ashcraft, 2003). Therefore, some inaccurate information has been passed between young people and it may be assumed that sex and relationship education does not meet young people's needs, so that young people turn to peers for information.

3.3.3 Positive and Negative Influences of Romantic Relationships on Adolescents

3.3.3.1 Positive Influences of Romantic Relationships

Romantic experiences are seen as having an important role in the development of an adolescent's self-identity, and positive self-esteem, as well as promoting a healthy personality and interpersonal skills (Montgomery and Sorell, 1998, Erikson, 1994, Greca and Harrison, 2005, Brown et al., 1999). That is, young people can benefit from healthy romantic relationships in terms of the development of their identity and personal relations. Coleman (1999), and Hendry and Sorensen (2007) also suggested that falling in love is a method of for an adolescent to search for his/her identity in another person's eyes, which is extended from Erikson's developmental stages. Being close to someone can be a mirror in which people see and know themselves; achieving intimacy is part of the search for identify.

Moreover, young people can gain support and companionship from dating partners, and also fulfil their desire of being needed and important to someone (Sorensen, 2007, Feiring, 1996, Overbeek et al., 2007, Bouchev and Furman, 2001). Other than bringing happiness, romantic relationships in adolescence can help young people to know themselves better, to search for the proper person for their future life, and to know how to build interpersonal relations with others. Young people can not only benefit in terms of identity development

and interpersonal skills, but can also obtain emotional support from healthy romantic relationships.

Romantic relationships are able to help establish young people's identity and healthy personal relations; nevertheless, romantic relationships can also have adverse influences on adolescents. The next section will discuss the negative influences of romantic relationships.

3.3.3.2 Negative Influences of Romantic Relationships

Although adolescents may benefit from healthy relationships, some negative influences from romantic relationships are apparent. For example, low academic performance, revenge for break-up, self-harm, suicide, and sexually transmitted disease are reported as the result of romantic relationships. Both mental and physical health may be affected by romantic relationships (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2003).

Some research has indicated that adolescents' mental health is related to their relationship situation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2003, Spruijt-Metz and Spruijt, 1997, Overbeek et al., 2007, Weisfeld and Woodward, 2004, Bouchev and Furman, 2001). Healthy relationships can promote young people's self-esteem and interpersonal behaviour, but romantic relationships can also affect young people's mental health. For example, jealousy and arguments in

romantic relationships always bring negative emotions for adolescents that can make them anxious and depressed. Moreover, some young people might collapse with break-up or quarrels and take extreme measures such as hurting others or themselves. There was a case where a Taiwanese girl murdered another girl whom her boyfriend had had an affair with (1998b). Thus, young people's mental health may be closely related to their romantic relationships situation.

Adolescents' physical health is also linked to their romantic relationships. Unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are important aspects where romantic relationships can affect young people's physical health. Bouchev and Furman (2001) and Sorensen (2007) suggested that young people could suffer from physical injury which results from unplanned pregnancy in their romantic relationships. Many girls seek abortions as the solution to an unplanned pregnancy, and they are at risk of physical injury and further pregnancies (DOH, 2004e). Furthermore, sexually transmitted disease can affect young people's physical health dramatically (DOH, 2004d). Due to lack of sex education and health support, young people with sexually transmitted disease might find it difficult to seek help. Thus, when young people's sex and romantic relationships go wrong, they might suffer from instability and physical harm.

3.3.4 Romantic Relationships and Cultures

3.3.4.1 Western and Eastern Cultures

Culture is an important factor shaping young people's opinions of romantic relationships (Goodwin and Tang, 1991, Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde, 2007). Cultures attach different values and meanings to romantic relationships. People from different cultures have varying opinions and attitudes toward romantic relationships. Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde (2007) addressed individualism and collectivism in different cultures in relation to romantic relationships. Young people from western countries, such as Britain, the US and Canada, are more individualistic and so they emphasize the needs of the self (Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde, 2007). On the other hand, collectivism can be seen in eastern cultures, where people care about the whole group. Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde (2007) provides an example of how western youth feel free to express their feelings compared to other young people from certain cultures, which are more likely to refrain from expressing their emotions in romantic relationships. That is, western young people are more likely to express their own feelings and opinions in romantic relationships; while others find it proper to agree with other people's opinions.

Moreover, western young people are more likely to become involved in romantic relationships compared to eastern youth. In Endo's study (2000), a majority of western

young people were having romantic relationships while only some of eastern young people in the study had romantic partners. It could be assumed that eastern young people are under such academic stress that they could not afford to manage a romantic relationship. For example, about one-third of Taiwanese adolescents experience stress in their academic study (Jiang, 2007). Parents and teachers try to encourage young people to focus on study rather than managing a romantic relationship. Therefore, it is not easy for Taiwanese adolescents to begin romantic relationships.

Furthermore, according to Endo et al. (2000), eastern young people view their romantic relationships differently from western young people. The Japanese, especially, evaluate their own romantic relationships more negatively than western youth (Endo et al., 2000). Bentley et al (2007) and Brown (1999) pointed out that equity in romantic relationships is the central character in western culture while Endo et al. (2000) reported that the Japanese always value their romantic partners more than themselves. Therefore, different values of romantic relationships make young people view romantic relationships differently, and also search for different requirements in their romantic partners.

Furthermore, western and eastern young people have different priorities in romantic relationships. Goodwin and Tang's study (1991) showed that western young people believe

in the importance of being humorous in romantic relationships while eastern young people care about economic issues. For example, western young people like to please their romantic partners with humour, and eastern young people enjoy a generous date.

In Taiwan, culture sets the conditions for how young people are to behave and value themselves. In recent years, many young people have viewed romantic relationships as fantasy and expectation that they have from novels and stories (Wen, 2003). Wang (2003) and Wen (2003) both indicated that Taiwanese young people are affected by western culture in their expectations of romantic relationships. For example, nowadays young people are able to talk openly about their own sexual relationships. In fact, some young people take romantic and sexual relationships casually, which is not accepted by the senior generations. Therefore, the culture in Taiwan is changing, along with young people's attitudes and behaviour toward romantic and sexual relationships.

3.3.4.2 Popular Culture and Media

Also important is popular culture and the media, as these provide another source of cultural meaning and relationships issues. Young people learn about romantic and sexual relationships from culture and media programmes. Ashcraft (2003), Moore (2002) and Mitchell (2004) suggested that movies and drama are popular among young people, and the

influences from such media in young people's romantic and sexual relationships are significant (The China Post, 2007b). Jones et al. (2004) and Charles (2002) also stated that magazines and novels serve as another site offering various materials on romantic and sex issues for young people. Young people find it easier to acquire information on romantic and sexual information from popular culture than to approach adults (BBC, 2004f). Accordingly, the importance of the media needs to be recognised as young people receive information from it.

Because of the convenience of access to the media, young people receive various messages from the internet and TV programmes. However, there has been debate about the knowledge and information that young people receive from such popular culture. Ashcraft (2003) and Mitchell (2004) gave the example of American movies to indicate the expectation and experiences that young people have about sex and romantic relationships.

The internet is another medium through which young people discuss romantic relationships (Suzuki and Calzo, 2004). Adolescents, in general, are reluctant to seek advice about romantic and sexual relationships from others. Most young people feel embarrassed and uncomfortable to talk to adults about what they see as sensitive topics. The internet provides a confidential and anonymous environment for people to discuss sex and

relationships. Merkle and Richardson (2000) added that the internet not only provides information about romantic relationships, it also connects people and romantic relationships may be formed. In cyberspace, people feel free and comfortable to talk, so that many young people have a chance to get to know different people and develop relationships.

Other research has shown that, in Taiwan, many young people are involved in internet relationships (Chen, 2001a, Ferng and Yen, 2005, Lin, 2004b). The internet has provided an opportunity for young people to make acquaintance with other people and sometimes romantic relationships are formed through the internet. Although there have been some abuse cases related to internet relationships, young people still find the internet to be a confidential way to talk about relationships and sex.

3.4 Counselling

3.4.1 Counselling in Taiwan

In 1999, the government in Taiwan launched a programme to integrate academic advice, discipline and guidance together to promote a beneficial learning environment for young people, followed by several projects providing counselling and guidance support on campus (MOE, 2007c). Young people's academic performance and their mental health are emphasized. The development of young people includes both physical and mental growth,

as well as emotional changes. Educators realise young people's developmental stages and the importance of counselling when students are under academic stress (Chen, 2007). Counselling services on campus aim to provide a friendly environment for young people, to assist them to face their problems such as academic stress, future plans, and school life adaptation. It is the school's responsibility to provide assistance for young people with both their mental and physical development (MOE, 2001). The training of school counsellors is important. Before being located in schools, school counsellors have professional training in young people's development and communication skills. It is important to ensure that school counsellors are able to provide what is necessary to meet the real needs of young people.

The government has encouraged teachers to participate in a voluntary guidance programme to ensure every student is taken care of (MOE, 2007c). The new guidance programme aims to improve the school environment and counselling service, and to make a counselling service available for young people. Reports indicate the effects of the counselling and guidance programme by revealing the decline in the dropout rate and the rate of teacher participation (MOE, 2003a, MOE, 2006f). However, its efficiency has been criticised. This is voluntary work and few teachers were willing to participate due to their own heavy teaching load, and not all the teachers had the guidance training (Hsin, 2003). This programme still needs to provided support for teachers to manage their time and training.

Compared to the counselling service in Taiwan, the counselling service in schools in the UK started in the 1960s (Baginsky, 2004, McLaughlin, 1999). The counselling service on campus has been studied and improved over time. McLaughlin (1999) and Baginsky (2004) described the development of school counselling in the UK and the qualities school counsellors need to have. Being approachable, having good listening skills, and building up safe and trusting relationships are the basic characteristics a school counsellor needs to have. Training for school counsellors is important. Theoretical knowledge and practical skills need to be addressed in the training, as well as specialised counselling approaches. Working hours should be limited for school counsellors and they should work within a code of ethics and practice such as that of the BACP. The school counselling services in the UK have an association to provide regulation, information and professional support but there is no such organisation in Taiwan. Examples to be followed from the UK will be discussed further in the implications Section 7.5.

Supervision for school counsellors is also important. Supervision including case discussion, mutual support and administrative issues needs to be set up for counsellors. The supervision should be independent of the organisation and should enhance the quality of service provided, and maintain good practice. Counsellors' problems with over-involvement and anxiety

should be discussed in supervision, reflection on practice and ethical issues is also needed.

Counselling in school has generated conflicts and confusion. In Taiwan, it is widely acknowledged that students are encouraged to pursue higher education and only focus on their academic performance (Xie, 2007). Although some teachers and school counsellors are becoming aware of the importance of students' mental health, counselling is still neglected on campus.

3.4.2 Counselling Service for Adolescents

School counselling services aim to provide assistance for young people. Tzeng (2001), the head of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, indicated that school counselling services are set for young people's needs, to provide them with help in many areas including accommodating to school life, academic study, future plans, and behavioural issues; it is also there for young people, teachers, and parents to promote better adaptation to school life and social life. Young people spend most of their time on campus so that schools have become the location of learning, getting along with peers, and building up their social relations with others. Therefore, counselling services on campus are important so that young people can obtain support and help when needed.

It is reported that a counselling service has brought about a positive outcome in young people's school accommodation situation. Chen (2001) concluded the effectiveness of a counselling and guidance service on campus in Taiwan with a moderate level of effect. Young people who approach the school counselling service have acknowledged the work of counsellors. It has been recognised that school counselling services have worked for students' benefit, and the rate of dropout has declined in many schools (MOE, 2006f) and it is believed that some of the reduction in student dropout is due to the counselling services on campus.

However, it is argued that the current counselling service might not provide the needed assistance for young people. The efficiency of counselling and guidance work could hardly be evaluated by numbers of students helped. The counselling services remain uncertain in helping young people. Previous research has reported that Taiwanese young people are reluctant to seek help; they view this as a personality flaw or as bringing shame on the family (Chang, 2007). Such reasons lead Taiwanese young people tend to keep problems to themselves rather than go for professional help. Hsin's (2003) research on the counselling system in high schools in Taiwan showed that young people are reluctant to go for school counselling services. There have been issues about the effectiveness of the counselling service on campus, in that school counsellors have had difficulties making time for their

counselling work. Lin (2002) conducted a survey of the work load that school counsellors have on campus. which showed that school counsellors spent more time on administration and teaching work than actual counselling. Chang (2004) also discovered that school counsellors spent more time doing other work. With the limitations of time and energy that school counsellors have, the extent to which the school counselling service is actually benefiting students remains doubtful.

Although school counsellors and home teachers are the people who spend time with young people on campus, it has been found that school counsellors and home teachers' workload is very heavy (Tzeng, 2004, Lin, 2002). When I was teaching, I had more than 35 students in a class, and had other teaching in another year group; in addition to the teaching load, it is also the home teacher's responsibility to communicate with parents. With limited time and energy available for young people, this can affect the quality of outcome of the school counselling service. Tzeng (2004) also found that school counsellors are under significant stress from work and that this can have a influence on the result of their counselling work. I also witnessed the fact that some of the school counsellors were busy doing their teaching and hardly had any time for counselling. Sometimes school counsellors had to reject students due to their tight schedule even when they were approached by students. Under such work loads and stress, it is very difficult for school counsellors and home teachers to

manage their teaching and counselling together. As I have been a teacher in high school, I understand that school counsellors have a very heavy workload; with almost 20 classes every week, school counsellors do have limited time for counselling work. There are also difficulties for them to follow up the progress of students in counselling. The lack of school counsellors has been a serious problem in many schools, moreover, some schools ignore the problem and focus on academic performance alone.

Further, the future of the counselling service on campus may not be optimistic; some reports have questioned the work of school counselling service. In Bih's (Bih, 2000) report about Ye's death on campus, the school counselling service has been challenged about how it benefits young people. It was argued that it was the school's responsibility to interfere when Ye was first bullied due to his identity issues, although some school staff claimed that students were just making fun so they did not interfere (Bih, 2000). In Ye's case, the counselling service on campus failed to provide support and advice, and so it could be said that the absence of a counselling service might lead to further problems for young people' experiencing victimisation. Hence, Ye's case has raised the attention of the counselling services on campus and how counselling service could be improved in order to assist young people.

3.4.3 Taiwanese Adolescents' Romantic Relationships and the Counselling Service

Romantic relationships have become a major topic of discussion for Taiwanese young people (Lee, 2004). Young people's romantic relationships have resulted in the risks of unplanned pregnancy. School counsellors are aware of romantic relationships and sexual issues; nevertheless, the assistance school counsellors can give is limited.

According to a report from the Department of Health (DOH) in 2003, Taiwan has the highest proportion of teenage mothers in Asian countries (Wu, 2003, 2003c, 2004b); therefore, sex and relationship education has not been considered to be very effective. Lee (2004) also indicated that a romantic relationship is one of the most popular topics among young people that adolescents like to talk about topics related to romantic relationships. While on campus, counselling services are the place where young people can consult and obtain advice. Thus, the counselling service is essential.

Some projects have been launched to improve the counselling service. For example, the one-to-one voluntary guidance programme aims to make sure every student is taken care of and that the staff are approachable. Authorities and schools are encouraging young people to talk about romantic relationships and sex issues with teachers and school counsellors.

The counselling service, along with sex and relationships education, is supposed to provide information and assistance for adolescents to manage their relationships. However, current sex and relationships education may not meet young people's needs since it has been reported that adolescents talk about sexual issues more openly among themselves than with adults (MOE, 2006g). Not only does the counselling service need to be promoted, but the sex and relationship education also needs improved materials.

It has been reported that many Taiwanese young people seek counselling about peer relationships, and the proportion of topics relating to romantic relationships is high (Lee, 2004). Besides peer relations, romantic and sex relationships have become important topics for young people. Since many young people would like counselling to discuss their peer relations and romantic relationships, the school counselling service needs proper materials and information for young people. However, it is still a sensitive topic on campus that not all school teachers are able to manage. Many teachers still insist that young people are expected to focus on academic performance, so that young people are hesitant to talk about their relationships to school counsellors (Hsin, 2003). Irrespective of the government's view that it is the school's duty to look after students' social life as well as their studies, many teachers still have doubts about young people having romantic relationships. In my teaching experience, teachers always have the attitude that students should be kept away from

romantic relationships, not only because their academic performance might be affected, but because they also worry about the risk of teenage pregnancy. Lack of proper material is a factor that makes school staff reluctant to speak about romantic and sex relationships (MOE, 2006d, Pao, 2004).

Sex and relationship issues in adolescents are important in Taiwan (MOE, 2004a). Taiwanese young people need accurate knowledge and professional counselling in managing their romantic and sex relationships (MOE, 2006b). Moreover, there have been some cases related to relationship problems among adolescents in Taiwan and love issues have been prominent on a hotline list (Wong, 2004). There are many young people suffering mentally and physically due to relationship problems. Suicide, revenge, depression and pregnancy have been reported since young people have difficulty in managing their relationships, and their future lives have been affected. School counselling services have been established for young people to consult. However, many young people do not approach the school counselling service, and instead turn to their peers for support. Therefore, although school counselling services aim to help young people in managing their romantic and sex relationships, young people prefer for their peers instead.

3.5 Summary

Adolescence is a period full of developmental tasks, the emergence of peers and romantic relationships which broaden young people's social network. Peer influences have been studied as a powerful factor in young people's attitude and behaviour. Self-esteem, personal social skills and identity searching could be the result of positive peer influences. On the other hand, depression, aggression and delinquency could be listed as negative peer influences. Thus, peers have a certain power to interfere and affect adolescents' life.

Young people experience an open environment in terms of romantic relationships and sex issues and the relevant topics have become important and interesting for them. Many young people start their romantic experiences at a young age. Moreover, romantic relationships and sex issues are popular topics for young people to discuss with peer friends. Cultures also allow for different interpretations of the values of romantic relationships for young people. The influences that culture has on young people have been discussed, along with popular culture and the media. Accordingly, adolescents' opinions about romantic relationships may be shaped by their culture.

The school counselling service in Taiwan is intended to promote the fulfilled development of young people. Home teachers and school counsellors are responsible for providing the

information and assistance young people need. However, due to the high rate of teenage pregnancy and the limitations of the school counselling service, Taiwanese young people do not get proper information about their romantic relationships, and young people rely on their peers. Peers are important in young people's romantic relationships.

Peers and romantic relationships are two of the most important issues during adolescent development. Influences from peers are able to promote and also put young peoples' romantic relationships in danger, while schools fail to provide proper assistance. Notwithstanding the critical situation whereby Taiwan needs to decrease the teenage pregnancy rates, young people in general are in need of proper help. Therefore, to understand Taiwanese young people's romantic relationships, it is important to realise how peers influence young people.

Chapter 4 : Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the process of research and the methods applied. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) defined methods as the approaches that are used in research to collect data.

In this chapter, the techniques and procedures used in the research will be presented and examined. Approaches to the analysis of the data collected will also be presented and discussed.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study. In data collection, a focus group, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire were used. Adolescents and school staff participated. An audio-tape recording was made and field notes were taken during the focus group, semi-structured interview and questionnaire practice, and these were transcribed.

A content analysis was used in dealing with qualitative data from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Text was encoded and analysed and a narrative report and table generated. Quantitative information and questionnaires were analysed using SPSS software, to deal with the numerical data. The tables and charts produced in the analysis are presented in the next chapter.

The following figure (Figure 4-1) illustrates the design of this research which indicates the procedure of literature and data collection.

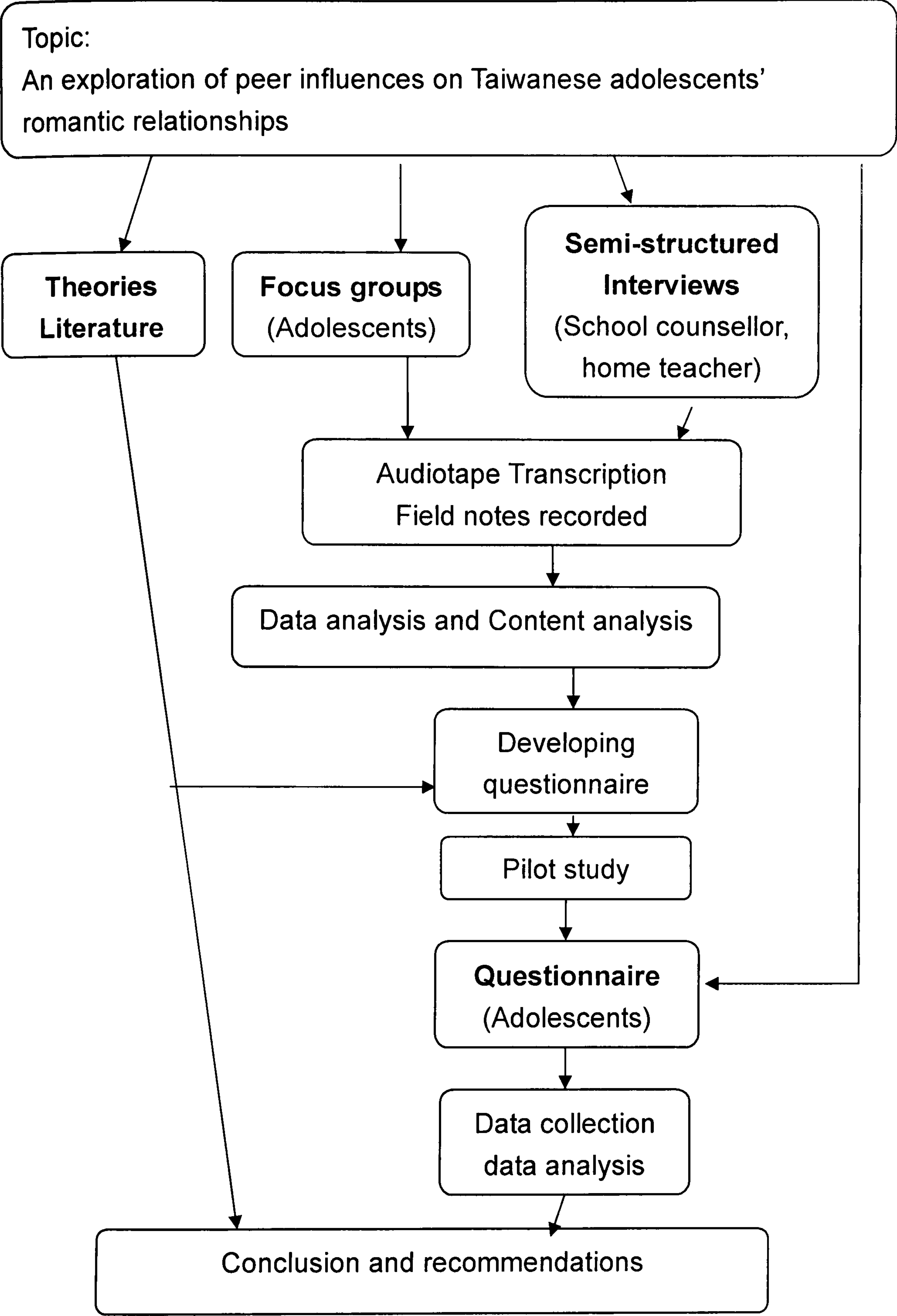


Figure 4-1 The Research Procedure

4.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This research focuses on the study of adolescents' views of peer and romantic relationships, and also how the relationships are seen by school counsellors and home teachers.

Since adolescence is identified as a crucial period in a person's development, a survey was conducted that could present the real opinions of adolescents' romantic relationships and the power of peers. Moreover, the number of adolescent pregnancies and abortions have caused social and health problems in Taiwanese society (Pao, 2004, Doh, 2004). In fact, Taiwan has the highest teenage pregnancy rates in east Asia, and romantic relationships have been cited as one of the related issues (Wang, 2004c). Although sex and relationship education has been in the curriculum since 2001, the information given to student is insufficient and unsatisfactory (Lin, 2004a, Doh, 2004, Sun, 2006a). The government has launched new sex education material for adolescents; however, the content and wording have provoked debated (MOE, 2006). Some scholars believe that adolescents know more than adults expect, so that adults may not be able to provide proper information for them. There would seem to be a gap between students' knowledge of romantic relationships and adults' expectations of what they know and should know about such relationships.

The literature and theory has sought to interpret the developmental stages of adolescents, and their emphasis on peer group and romantic relationships has been presented in previous chapters (Chapters 2 and 3). Since peers have become young people's main social agent, they prefer to share information and experiences about romantic relationships with peers. Peers are assumed to be a source of information through which young people obtain part of their knowledge of romantic relationships. Therefore, it is important to explore the relationship between peer influences and adolescents' romantic relationships. The gap between the truth of adolescents' romantic relationships and how they have been viewed by school staff have also been investigated in this research.

The main purpose of this study is to identify Taiwanese adolescents' attitudes to romantic relationships and to examine how peer influence affects adolescents in their romantic relationships. This research targeted adolescent Taiwanese students, aged from 12 to 17, studying in high schools.

The main research question and hypothesis focused on whether there is a peer influence on Taiwanese adolescents' attitudes toward romantic relationships.

This question explores adolescents' perspectives with respect to peer and romantic relationships, and also includes Taiwanese adolescents' opinions on romantic relationships

and their peers' influence upon them. These sub-questions included adolescents' definition of romantic relationships and influence from peers, so that it was necessary to address the following sub questions and key questions.

- A. What influences do adolescents have from peers in relation to romantic relationships?
 - i. What are the factors contributing to different peer influences?
- B. How do peers influence adolescents' romantic relationships?
 - i. How do adolescents get information about romantic relationships?
 - ii. How do adolescents perceive romantic relationships
- C. Is there an influence from the counselling service on adolescents in their romantic and peer relationships?

4.3 Rationale for Research Design

Wiersma (2000) stated that a research design should be able to provide answers to the specific research questions; hence, the research design needed to be sound and complete to bring out the answers. The results of the research were interpreted and understood and answers to the research questions were produced from analysis of the research results. Therefore, the research methods would have to influence how the research was carried out and interpreted.

First, the theoretical framework and relevant literature has been reviewed to provide knowledge and background information for this research. The developmental aspects of adolescents have been discussed from their psychosocial, psychosexual, and cognitive aspects. Peer influences and young people's romantic relationships have also been discussed, and the background situation of Taiwan has also been presented to explain the dilemma that Taiwanese young people are facing.

For practical data collection, combined research methods were applied including both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This combination of various data collection methods is called triangulation, and will be discussed later in this chapter. Qualitative research methods included focus groups for adolescents and semi-structured interviews with school staff. A questionnaire based survey was used as the quantitative research method which sought to gather information on adolescents' thoughts about romantic relationships and peer influences. The questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative information about the opinions people hold. On the other hand, the qualitative methods focus groups and interviews were considered better for exploring how those opinions are structured (Kitzinger, 1995). Qualitative research, usually meaning interpreting words rather than numbers, has been applied in many social science fields including in the educational context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Any non-verbal data from young people's interaction in focus groups

was also treated as a source of data. Field notes were made during the discussion and recorded after sessions (Wiersma, 2000, Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Interactions and expressions were observed and recorded. Two focus groups were held in high schools in Taiwan. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed to generate an understanding of young people's thinking on the issues.

The focus group is a flexible data collection method and has been widely used in educational research (Tierney and Dilley, 2001; (Morgan, 2001). The advantage of conducting focus groups with adolescents is that it gives them a chance to put forward their own interpretation and thoughts rather than gathering information from adults' understandings and conceptions. Moreover, group interaction was likely to promote a climate of peer culture (Morgan, 2001), which is the core of this research and important for the researcher to observe. Using focus groups in this research enabled data to be collected on interaction within the groups as well as information given. Participants expressed their opinions of this research and discussed it with other members. In focus groups, adolescents shared their points of view about romantic relationships and friendships and, through discussion, peer influences were revealed. Further discussion in the conduct of the focus group will be presented later in 4.6.1.

Semi-structured interviews with school counsellors and home teachers were carried out in the

research to examine how adolescents' romantic relationships are viewed and what the school could do for young people in such matters. School counsellors are the professional persons who offer assistance and a counselling service to young people. Home teachers are the classroom based teachers who have more interaction with students compared with other teachers. Thus, they are the most suitable persons to discuss how peer influences affect young people's romantic relationships. School staff explained their opinions based on observations and interventions,. Four home teachers and school counsellors in high schools were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews will be discussed further in 4.6.2.

The questionnaire was designed in accordance with the themes generated from qualitative data and also referred to previous research by Clasen and Brown (1985). Taiwanese adolescents in high schools aged from 12 to 17 participated. The results may show the extent to which peers influence adolescents' thoughts and behaviour in terms of romantic relationships. The questionnaire will be discussed further in 4.6.3.

One of the commonest criticisms of qualitative research has been stated by Greenhalgh and Taylor (1997). The findings of any qualitative study only relate to the limited setting where they are obtained (Greenhalgh and Taylor, 1997). In this study, the qualitative research was set in two high schools located in different areas of Taiwan, with only two focus groups and

four semi-structured interviews being conducted. Therefore, the result can only be presented as a regional result and is not representative of the whole situation of Taiwanese adolescents. This issue will be discussed in the research limitations presented in 4.8.

The answers to the research questions will be discussed in the context of relevant literature. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations will be given and emerging issues will be listed for further research interests.

4.3.1 Triangulation

Atkinson and Coffey (2001) and Cohen et al. (2000) provided a definition of triangulation, which may be defined as a combination of methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Triangulation, seeing research from more than one point of view, can help to gather opinions from different angles and explain the data more explicitly and effectively. By not only providing multiple sources of evidence in data collection and building the researcher's confidence in the data, triangular techniques also help to overcome the problem of 'method-boundedness' (Cohen et al., 2000). Applying different approaches in research can provide various perspectives on the world, and the research will be more flexible. Merton (1956), Campbell, Fiske (1956) and Cohen (2000) have also indicated that one powerful effect of triangulation is to improve validity in qualitative research. Thus,

applying triangulation will enable the provision of a wider view of the research, and enrich the data.

Triangulation is applied in this research. This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods so that the research and analysis have been enriched by the combination (Russell, 1999). Focus groups and interviews provided rich qualitative information; questionnaires were the source of quantitative data.

4.4 Rationale for sample selection

The sampling strategy is one of the factors which affect the quality of research (Cohen et al., 2000). Only with the recruitment of suitable samples can accurate answers to research questions be achieved.

This research was conducted in Taiwan. First, about 20 young people voluntarily joined the focus group discussions, which presented the topic that young people prefer to talk with peers about romantic relationships; in addition, their interaction was observed.

Two focus groups were conducted in two high schools. The first school was RY junior high school in Nantou County. This small school, with a total of nine classes, is located in a

mountain area where most people are native residents and have limited social and economic resources. The second school, JS high school, is located in Taipei County. This school is much bigger, having more than 30 classes, and the environment is more industrialized. All participation was voluntary. Permission was given by the head teachers and head of the counselling office in both schools. Posters were put up on campus to recruit students, and the venue was set in group counselling rooms in both schools. In order to maintain a comfortable and easy environment for participants, as well as the quality of conversations, the numbers of participants was limited to around ten people in each group.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with school counsellors and home teachers in the two schools where the focus groups took place. Students spent most of their time being with on campus where the teachers were as well. School counsellors are the persons students would talk to about their problems. Home teachers spend most of their time being with students and observing their daily lives when students are with their friends. Therefore, home teachers and school counsellors are the proper persons for the young people to talk to about their relationships and friendships. School counsellors and home teachers were invited for interview. Because of the time and accommodation available for both the interviewee and researcher, four staff participated. The head of the counsellor office in RY junior high school was interviewed, and another home teacher with tutoring experience also

participated. One school counsellor and a home teacher in JS high school were also interviewed. In total, two home teachers and two school counsellors participated in this research and shared their perspectives on adolescents' relationships and friendships issues.

A questionnaire was designed to explore adolescents' views about peer influence and romantic relationships. The target of this questionnaire was adolescents in Taiwan. Nine schools participated in this survey and students in these schools completed the questionnaire, which was given to the adolescents randomly.

A sample size of 280 adolescents participated in the questionnaire. Cohen et al. (2000) stated that a minimum of thirty samples is necessary if statistical analysis is to be applied. An envelope was given with the questionnaire, so that participants could seal their questionnaires when they handed in the envelope. Retaining anonymity and confidentiality was thought to be important in order to encourage the adolescents to reveal their feelings.

4.5 Data Collection

4.5.1 Focus group

4.5.1.1 Focus groups

A focus group is a kind of group interview with several people on a specific topic (Bryman, 2001, Kitzinger, 1995). However, there are differences between interviews and focus groups. Bryman (2001) indicated the following differences; first, a focus group typically targets a specific topic to be explored in depth, while interviews obtain broader information. Second, how participants respond and react with each other in a focus group is also of interest to the researcher (Bryman, 2001 and Cohen et al, 2000).

There are many advantages for the focus group in research. First, focus groups provide a greater numbers participants and a social context that can stimulate discussion and generate insights (Goulding, 2002). In this study, the focus group was used in order to obtain and record adolescents' thoughts and behaviours. The collected data was used to design the semi-structured interview. Secondly, focus groups can bring out subconscious reasons for behaviour, and examine what, how and why the participants think by exploring their knowledge and experiences (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981, Kitzinger, 1995, Goulding, 2002). The interaction and discussion among group members allows their behaviour to be observed

and recorded.

Moreover, focus groups can provide more information through the conversations and interaction from discussion within the groups, compared to the one-to-one relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Morgan, 1996, Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981, Kitzinger, 1995). This is one of methods of finding out what participants think about the topic and other issues that arise in the conversation.

Furthermore, many focus groups have been conducted as attitude studies, to find out how people feel about certain topics (Greenbaum, 1998). In order to discover adolescents' attitudes toward romantic relationships, the focus group was considered a suitable method of enabling discussion, observing arguments, and revealing and recording the participants' attitudes. Therefore, focus groups were chosen as an approach in this research because of the need to diversify the sources of information. In the discussion, various aspects of the way in which young people interact with each other, including their appearance, attitudes, emotional expressions and body language, helped to explain the influences upon them.

Another advantage of using a focus group instead of a group interview was that focus groups can generate more information from interaction within groups (Kitzinger, 1995). This

means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging ideas and commenting on each others' experiences and points of view. The interaction and discussion between group members boosted and enriched the data.

However, there are still difficulties in conducting a focus group. Some participants might talk too little while some might dominate the group (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981; Kitzinger, 1995). It is difficult to find out what these silent members think about the topic if researcher does not encourage them to speak. On the other hand, some participants might talk a lot and become leaders in the group. Sometimes the subject might be changed as the participants extend it with new ideas. When this occurs, the researcher needs to bring the participants back to the topic. The researcher has the role of being a moderator (Morgan, 1996; Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981), directing the group discussion, encouraging participants to speak, and to make the group members feel comfortable about sharing their ideas. Morgan (2001) also indicated the importance of keeping the conversation on topic while encouraging members to interact comfortably in the group. One of the limitations of conducting focus groups is that the degree of structure needs to be balanced. The researcher needs to be aware of the research topic and direct the discussion to it, whilst also giving freedom for the participants to discuss their opinions.

Moreover, the members and questions will affect the result of focus group discussion (Morgan, 2001). The focus group can be enriched when participants provide relevant information, and the wording of questions gives precise ideas for participants to think about. Therefore, the preparation of the focus group needs to be carried out carefully. The focus group structure needs to be piloted to see if the wording and questions are appropriate for young people.

During the focus group, tape recording and transcripts were taken to discover how the participants talked and what they talked about (Bryman, 2001). Tape recording also helped the researcher to remember who was talking, when he/she was talking and what he/she talked about. Notes were not taken at the time at this might have made the participants nervous and have distracted the researcher from concentrating on important information. The researcher and participants agreed that the contents of the interviews would remain confidential, and it was hoped that this would further help to make the participants comfortable enough to reveal their thoughts.

4.5.1.2 Piloting the focus group

Careful piloting can enhance the reliability of research (Cohen et al., 2000). A pilot study is important to ensure the question is suitable for the objectives. The guideline questions for focus group were designed according to the research question and sub questions (see appendices). The pilot was undertaken with experienced school teachers and counsellors as well as volunteer young people, in order to check the questions and avoid any questions generating misunderstandings. Difficulties were discussed with experienced school teachers, counsellors and volunteer young people, and suggestions were obtained.

In addition, basic details such as age and gender should be recorded at the pilot stage (Bloor, 2001). The experienced home teachers and school counsellors were aware of young people's developmental stage and realised that romantic relations and peers are important for young people.

The venue and time also needed to be discussed at the pilot stage so that the researcher could manage the time in the focus group effectively (Bloor, 2001). In this study, focus groups were held in different schools, so that the arrangement of time and venue had to be agreed with schools in advance; the proper length of time was also discussed in the pilot, to ensure

that participants did not feel that the discussion was too long or too short for them to express their opinions.

One of the most important reasons to conduct a pilot with a focus group is to address the nature and content of the focus group in piloting (Bloor, 2001). Explaining the context and rationale of this research in pilot helped to make the focus group run well and gain the data needed. Participants had the information they needed to provide the answers that could meet the research aims.

4.5.1.3 Reliability and validity in the focus group

To ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research, bias should be avoided (Cohen et al., 2000). There are many factors affecting validity in research. Sampling is an important factor influencing the validity of the research. Hence, care should be taken in sampling selection in focus groups in order to gather the information needed. Misunderstandings in discussions might also lead to bias and invalidity; any such misunderstandings should be clarified to ensure that all participants understand the questions in the same way.

How the research is conducted and managed can also affect the reliability (Cohen et al., 2000). The way the researcher interferes and/or backs off might influence the participants'

discussions. Moreover, the way the researcher interprets the data gathered from the group discussion can affect the reliability of the research since different interpretations can lead to different conclusions from the same results. Therefore, to maintain the reliability, the research has to have a proper moderating guide and careful analysis.

Reliability might be affected by field notes and observations made in focus groups (Silverman, 1993). More detailed information from focus groups needs to be recorded for analysis. In this study, no notes were taken during the focus group procedure in order not to disturb the participants, but many details were jotted down right after the group. Those notes include the interaction, behaviour, and expressions of participants. Therefore, these notes should be a crucial point in the process of the focus group and after the group.

4.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

4.5.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In this study, a semi-structured interview was designed using information from the focus groups. School counsellors and home teachers were interviewed to identify how they saw young people.

The interview is one method of gathering data and sampling respondents' opinions from their experiences through guided conversation (Warren, 2001, Goulding, 2002, Cohen et al., 2000).

Interviews in research can not only transfer and collect information but also share mutual interests in daily life (Cohen, L. et al 2000). It provides flexibility in that deeper conversations can be promoted and new ideas generated. Through face to face conversations both verbal and non-verbal messages can be collected.

Cohen (2000) described the variety of categories of interview; though, Patton (1980), LeCompte and Preissle (1993), and Bogdan and Biklen (1992) had different categories of interview. All types of interviews have strengths and weaknesses, and have access to different data. Both quantitative and qualitative information can be obtained through various interview approaches. Cohen et al. (2000) argued that the interview should be more standardised and structured when the research aimed to get more comparative data. In structured interviews, interviewees have limited freedom as the content and procedure have been organized by interviewer. On the other hand, open-ended questions in an unstructured interview can offer more flexibility and greater freedom for interviewees (Cohen, et al, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews are designed as a balance between these two types. One of the advantages of the semi-structured interview is that the interviewer retains control and

guidance in the interview while the interviewees still have a some freedom in their responses.

In this research, semi-structured interviews were used. Semi-structured interviews allow interviewees to reveal the ways they see the social world (Bryman, 2001). They also provide flexibility and depth in the conversations and the interviewer can follow the responses of interviewees and probe with further questions (Cohen, et al, 2000 and Bryman, 2001).

The semi-structured interview design should include topics and open-ended questions but the sequence and wording may be adjusted to the actual situation(Cohen et al., 2000). An outline of the content will be designed in advance to help the interviewer maintain relevance. As any additional issues emerge, the interviewer can direct the conversation back to the study after discussion. If the emerging topic is closely related to the research topic, further discussion could be encouraged.

So, a semi-structured interview was planned in order to assist in the process of exploring teachers' and counsellors' views. Interviews with teachers and school counsellors were carried out to reveal their opinions of adolescents' behaviour in romantic relationships based on their observation. As stated earlier home teachers are the classroom based teachers who spend a great deal of time with young people in schools, and they also had some perspectives

on peer influence and school counsellors are professional helpers in dealing with students' problems. Accordingly, they are the perfect persons to talk about students' school life. Black (2002) gives an account of a teacher's own experience and observation of peer influence. The semi-structured interview was used to bring out home teachers and school counsellors' opinions on peer influences in romantic relationships. The teachers' view of peer influence was examined from a number of different angles.

4.5.2.2 Piloting the semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview guide was piloted with experienced home teachers and school counsellors. As stated before, a pilot study can enhance the reliability of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2000). The wording was examined to avoid misunderstanding. The length of time and the proper venue for use were discussed in the pilot. Advice and suggestions were taken from experienced school staff because of their knowledge and experiences of the topic.

A further benefit from a pilot is that it can help to set up classifications for coding the open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2000). For example, the reaction to young people's romantic relationships was investigated in the interview, and the classification of could be positive, negative, no comment. It will be easy in the actual interview process to write

down the information.

4.5.2.3 Reliability and validity in the interview

Reliability and validity in interviews can advance the effectiveness of research; thus they are essential elements. Howitt and Cramer (2000) defined reliability:

Reliability is the extent to which the measure will give the same response under similar circumstances (Howitt and Cramer, 2000).

Reliability in research also encompasses its stability, equivalence and consistency (Howitt et al., 2000, Cohen et al., 2000). In interviews, a well-structured interview will avoid misunderstanding and help to control reliability, although the freedom could be limited. The same question guide and interviewer attitude were used to make sure the participants understand the questions in the same way.

In order to measure people's attitudes in interviews, the problem of validity is most important (Bouma et al., 1995). The honesty, richness and depth of information provided by participants will influence the validity of the research (Cohen et al., 2000). Therefore, a proper sample, methodology, and measures will increase validity, and bias has to be avoided.

Cohen et al (2000) identified that bias is the most serious problem in respect to reliability and validity arising from interviews (Cohen et al., 2000). Bias might come from the personality of the interviewer, interviewees, or the content of the questions asked.

To increase validity and reliability, a semi-structured interview was used in the research to balance freedom and structure. The words used in the questions were examined in the pilot, so that the questions could be understood without misinterpretation. Moreover, the interviewer's attitude in asking questions might also influence the answer. According to this, the interviewer has to be aware of her attitude and to avoid her opinions affecting the respondents' answers. For example, as the interviewer, I would remain neutral through the whole procedure, and not to judge anything participants would say.

4.5.3 The Questionnaire

4.5.3.1 The Research Questionnaire

The questionnaire is widely used and a useful method of collecting survey data (Wiersma, 2000, Howitt et al., 2000). Through a questionnaire, respondents can provide their opinions and answers. There are two general types of questions: selected-response and open-ended questions (Wiersma, 2000). Selected-response questions include multiple choice, the Likert

scale, and ranking, (Cohen et al., 2000). Open-ended questions allow more freedom for respondents in answering. Different types of questions will produce different types of answers.

In this study, the questionnaire was designed taking into account the analysis of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, as well as the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) invented by (Clasen and Brown, 1985). Instructions that might have negatively affected were avoided. For example, leading questions were avoided. Leading questions are the questions with assumptions or expected answers; they will influence the respondents' answers. Moreover, questions should be short and precise rather than long and ambiguous.

4.5.3.2 Questionnaire design

Adolescents' romantic relationships and peer relations are important issues in Taiwan; however, there has been no academic research and measurements targeted at these issues. Therefore, the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) was adopted in the research, along with qualitative research methods, to draw out the issues among young people and their opinions of peer influences and romantic relationships.

Questions related to romantic relationships were developed from the Peer Pressure Inventory

(PPI) formulated by Clasen and Brown (Clasen and Brown, 1985),. The scale of related statements are listed in figure 4-2, and the subscale is in the middle columns. There are six statements relating to romantic relationships and peer influences.

HOW STRONG is the pressure from your FRIENDS to:	LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO PRESSURE (subscale)	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	LOT	Or to:
Have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend (opposite sex)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT just go out with one guy or girl
Go out with boys/girls (opposite sex)	3	2	1	peer involvement	-1	-2	-3	NOT go out with boys/ girls (opposite sex)
NOT ask your friends who you should go out with	-3	-2	-1	peer conformity	1	2	3	Go out only with someone your friends say is okay to date
Do things to impress members of the opposite sex	3	2	1	peer involvement	-1	-2	-3	Try NOT to impress members of the opposite sex
'Make out' (kissing or petting)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT 'make out' (kissing or petting)
NOT go 'all the way' (not have sexual intercourse)	-3	-2	-1	misconduct	1	2	3	Have sexual intercourse (go 'all the way')

Figure 4-2 Statements from PPI (Clasen and Brown, 1985)

The first statement pair, *‘Have a steady boy friends or girlfriend (opposite sex) vs. Not just go*

out with one guy or girl', indicates the level of influence from friends on the relationships of participants. The second pair, '*Go out with boys/girls (opposite sex) vs. Not go out with boys/girls (opposite sex)*', identifies the level of encouragement by peers for young people go out with the opposite sex as a social event. The third pair, '*Not ask your friends who you should go out with vs. Go out with someone your friends say is okay to date*', show the level of friends, encouragement on going out for a date. The fourth statement, '*Do things to impress members of the opposite sex vs. Try not to impress members of opposite sex*', reveals the level of peer influence on young people to impress the opposite sex. The fifth one, '*Making out (kissing or petting) vs. Not make out (kissing or petting)*', identifies the level of pressure from peers to have or refrain from physical contact with romantic partners. The last statement, '*Not go all the way (not have sexual intercourse) vs. Have sexual intercourse (go all the way)*', measures the pressure from peers on young people to have sexual relationships. These statements were rephrased in the questionnaire used in the research. For example, the statement '*Not ask your friends who you should go out with vs. Go out with someone your friends say is okay to date*' was rephrased as 'my friends tell me whom I should go out with' in my questionnaire. The wording also needs to be rephrased in accordance with the language and terms of Taiwanese adolescents' daily use.

The romantic relationships discussed in the PPI merely discussed the aspects of dating,

physical contact on dates, and focused on opposite sex relationships. The result of focus group and semi-structured interview confirmed that dating activities and physical contact were area where young people are influenced by peers. On the other hand, the focus group and semi-structured interviews also explored more aspects than these statements do, therefore, to meet the needs of young people identified in the focus groups and semi-structured interviews and fit the research, the final questionnaire addressed the topics from the focus groups and semi-structured interview as well as those from the PPI.

The topics discussed in focus group and semi-structured interviews include: peer topics, romantic relationships, gender identity, and counselling service. Those concepts were put into questions in the questionnaire. For example, in peer topics, focus group and interviews discussed the couple making situation among young people; the question has been out as 'My friends suggest who I should go out with'. Concepts in these topics were rephrased into questions in the questionnaire.

There were in total twenty-nine questions in three sections including multiple choice, yes-no and Likert scale questions. All the questions were closed questions, based on the fact that the pilot study and pre-testing discussion revealed that closed questions made it easier for young people to express their opinions than open questions.

The first section asked about the background information of the participants with two questions about age and gender.

The second section was related to romantic relationships. The six questions in this section asked about romantic relationships experience, attitude to romantic relationships, emotion involved in romantic relationships and sources of information about romantic relationships.

The question addressed area based on the results of the focus group on the theme of romantic relationships.

The third section was the biggest part of the questionnaire with twenty-one questions including topics young people usually talk about and share with peer friends, the influences of friends upon each other, and reactions to feelings on seeing friends' romantic relationships. Most of the questions in this section were addressed to peer topics the primary theme drawn from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. So, issues such as hobbies, fashions, emotions and peer reaction were covered in this section. The questions also covered the statements from the PPI: friends' suggestion, physical contact, and reaction to friends' relationships. Further, this section also contains questions regarding to the relationships between young people and their teachers so that the result would show how young people see

the counselling service provided for them. These questions were based on the theme of the counselling service from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Also, this section contained seven further questions regarding young people's experiences in romantic relationships. Young people without experiences did not have to answer them all. The final question on the questionnaire asked about young people's opinions about peer influences on romantic relationships. This question was rephrased from young people's ideas about their friends' affecting their romantic relationships. This aimed to reveal any difference between adolescents' views of their own relationships and their ideas about adolescents in general. This section, then, contains concepts from the focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and the material from the PPI.

4.5.3.2 Types of Questions Used in the Questionnaire

The questionnaire included Likert scale questions, dichotomous questions, and open-questions. Likert scale questions are widely used in questionnaire surveys, provide a scale where respondents can simply circle a point. Such question scales can be used to measure the attitudes of participants (Howitt et al., 2000). Likert scales were widely used in the questionnaire to ask about young people's attitudes toward peer influences on their romantic relationships. Dichotomous questions are usually used in highly structured research

(Cohen et al., 2000). In this study, yes-and-no question were adopted. Open-ended questions were used to discover the participants' opinions. Cohen et al. (2000) explained that open-ended questions can invite honest, personal comments from respondents. Respondents were encouraged to be free about their ideas and opinions.

4.5.3.3 Pilot Study

A questionnaire should have a pilot study before being used in practice. The questionnaire was designed to gather data to verify the topics and themes drawn from qualitative study and refers to PPI. As stated previously, a pilot study, can improve the questionnaire's validity and reliability.

The pilot should be held after the questionnaire is designed. A small group of students will actually complete the questionnaire. The wording of questions is important to enable respondents to understand the questions and, thus, needs to be piloted carefully. Oppenheim (1992) and Wiersma (2000) indicated that every word used in the questionnaire should be piloted. The wording might cause misunderstanding and be interpreted to have different meanings, so piloting can help to rephrase questions so that they can be understood clearly. So, piloting helps to increase the validity, reliability and practicability of the questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1992, Cohen et al., 2000). This survey was conducted in high

schools in Taiwan, so the wording needed to be adapted to those young people's thinking and usage of words. Piloting, then, is an essential step in conducting a questionnaire. In this study after the pilot, the questionnaire was modified to be more suitable for the intended respondents.

The pilot study was held with a group of volunteer students to test the use of the questionnaire. There were twenty-five volunteer adolescents in the pilot study including both males and females. Introduction, guidance, and explanations were given as planned. Time was measured to establish the proper length of time needed to complete the questionnaires. A follow-up discussion with the volunteer students provided more information for the using the actual questionnaire. It was found that more detailed explanations and introduction was required to make participants understand the research better.

The questionnaire design was also discussed with home teachers and school counsellors to examine the appropriateness of the questionnaire. The school staff observe young people's daily life on campus where they had interaction with friends; they also had knowledge about young people's culture and popular issues.

Pilot procedure

During piloting, the volunteer respondents finished the questionnaire in about 20 minutes. The procedure ran smoothly. First, those young people thought that the topic was interesting and they understood the questions well. Some volunteer students reported difficulty in answering the open questions; the difficulties reported included definitions of romantic relationships, and where respondents got their information about romantic relationships. Therefore, these open questions were rephrased into closed questions in the actual questionnaire. The pilot respondent also revealed that they were hesitant to answer questions about physical contact since they were worried that their statements might be disclosed. Those without romantic relationships experiences stated that they found it difficult to answer questions regarding romantic relationships; they had mostly answered the questions using imagination but were uncertain. Overall, the questions were clear enough and young people could understand the questions clearly. The questionnaire was modified to take account of the findings from the pilot study group. Open questions were replaced by closed questions. The section where the young people could express their opinions about their romantic relationships was made optional so those who had no experience could choose whether to answer the questions.

Home teachers and school counsellors, expressed concern that young people might not be

willing to reveal their opinions about romantic relationships since they seldom approached school staff to discuss them. The researcher was a stranger and also an adult to them; some might feel excited by the topic but some might not. According to school staff, the young people in their schools kept their discussion about romantic relationships among friends. However, as an outsider, the researcher might be able to discover something that school staff could not. Young people might feel safe to express their views to somebody from outside their school. Although the school staff felt that the length and wording of the questionnaire was appropriate, they felt that the open questions might be too difficult for the young people to answer.

After the pilot study, the questionnaire was modified to include only closed questions in order to encourage young people to answer, since open questions were considered difficult for them.

4.5.3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Reliability and validity refer to problems with the accuracy and appropriateness of the questionnaire (Bouma et al., 1995). Following Belson (1985), Cohen (2000) indicated that there are two viewpoints about the validity of questionnaires. The two factors are, First, whether the respondents answered the questionnaires honestly and, secondly, whether those

who did not return questionnaires would have given the same answers as those who returned them. Using a questionnaire is more reliable than using interviews since respondents are likely to be more honest and it is more economical (Cohen et al., 2000). The questionnaire is anonymous and respondents will be given an envelope to seal the questionnaire in, so that they do not need to worry that their answers will be disclosed this increases the likelihood that respondents will express their opinions truthfully. However, using questionnaires has the problem that some people do not return the questionnaires and the proportion returned might be small (Cohen et al., 2000). In my research, the return rate maintains rather high because the questionnaires were collected on campus where young people filled in, and the teachers helped to collect them.

4.6 Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from focus groups, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Different approaches of data analysis were applied. A content analysis was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. Tables and text present the results of this analysis. Statistical software, SPSS14.0, was used in dealing with the quantitative data. Charts and tables will present the results of the survey.

4.6.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis mentioned by Berelson (Krippendorff, 2004, Mayring, 2000, Holsti, 1969, Berelson, 1971). The original function that content analysis was used for in research focused on quantitative description of the content, but has been developed further for qualitative use. Content analysis has been widely used in text analysis in social science, such as describing attitudinal and behaviour responses in communications. Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as:

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from text to

the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2004).

Research questions are usually the core of content analysis since the research questions should be answered directly from the content (Holsti, 1969). In carrying out content analysis, research questions are important in the categories coding (Krippendorff, 2004).

Coding is the process that classifies raw data into categories; necessarily, then, the categories must reflect to the research questions.

Although Palmquist, Carley, and Dale (1997) argued the varied definition of content analysis and thematic analysis, similarities have been noted. In content analysis, the focus is to look

for the appearance of such terms in the texts including implicit and explicit items. The content analysis has flexibility to identify the materials needed.

In this research, the categories have been classified as themes related to the research question, including peer topics, romantic relationships, gender identity and homosexuality, counselling service and the interaction among participants. In content analysis, a concept is identified for examining further similar terms, and the analysis involves frequency that how participants use such concepts. For example, the content in relation to what young people do with peers and talk to them about were identified as 'peer topic'; and what they discuss about the current counselling services on campus and sex education were allocated to the theme of 'counselling service'. Those themes echoed to the research questions which referred to those topics. After the themes have been identified, the sub-themes were drawn out and put into each category. The frequency was also noted to indicate the frequency with which topics were mentioned.

4.6.2 Statistical software

The questionnaires provided quantitative data to be analysed using SPSS 14.0 and the results will be displayed in the form of tables and charts. The SPSS program is widely applied in social science surveys (Bryman et al., 1999). Frequencies, means and percentages were

used to present the background information on participants. As the questionnaire applied the Likert scale, the mean was calculated for the answers to each question. Moreover, correlations were calculated to examine the relationships between each item. Chi-square was calculated to see if there were significant relations between one factor and other items.

4.7 Limitations

Because of the different research methods applied, this research has limitations in methodology. First, an inappropriate length of time might cause tiredness or stress in the participants, and an uncomfortable room would also make the research less effective (Greenbaum, 1998). In this study, participants might become impatient and lose interest if the time allowed was too long. Participants might be distracted by noise outside the venues.

Moreover, the validity and reliability of this research could be limitations. It is difficult to tell how accurate the data collected from young people and school teachers/counsellors could be. The bias stated in 4.6.1.3 and 4.6.2.3 could affect the result of the current research. Young people participating in the focus groups and questionnaires might not answer the questions truthfully. Stereotyping and misunderstanding may have existed on campus which school teachers and counsellors did not detect. Bias is a major potential influence in research. Besides, participants might be hesitant to show their real feeling due to pressure

from others. The information gathered from participants might be limited.

Finally, only nine high schools in Taiwan participated in this research due to the economic and time issues impinging upon the researcher. The result could only be presented as a regional study, not representing the situation in the whole of Taiwan. This limitation echoes to the criticism of qualitative research in research design in 4.3. Qualitative research has limited data collection capacities. The results can only represent the opinion of the group and cannot be generalised to the population.

4.7.1 Research ethics

This study has closely observed and applied the policies on research ethics from the Research Ethics Framework of the ESRC (2005b) and Ethical Assurance for Social Research in Government (2005a); these are ethical principles which should be adhered to in social research.

During the conduct of this study, some ethical issues emerged, such as confidentiality and informed consent. This section discusses these issues along with the principles of the ESRC (2005b) and Ethical Assurance for Social Research in Government (2005a).

Sound application and conduct of social research methods, and interpretation of the findings

First, in order to ensure the methods applied, pilot studies are undertaken to ensure the sound application and conduct of social research methods. The structure of research also needs to be examined carefully.

Participation based on informed consent

Secondly, informed consent was gained from schools where the study was conducted. The present research targeted at young people in high schools in Taiwan aged 13 to 17. Therefore, the consent form was given to their parents or guardians. Young people and their parents received information about this research in advance since there were many children aged under 16 and the guardians had to be informed.

Enabling participation

In this study, sample design, venue and time arrangement, and refreshment were well-prepared to make participants feel comfortable, since a comfortable and safe environment and atmosphere can help participants to relax and get involved in the research.

Avoidance of personal and social harm

The researcher was aware of issues of personal and social harm since the topic was sensitive for young people. Thus, during the process, the researcher managed and intervened when the damage might have occurred. For example, when homosexuality and crush were argued, some participants took it personal and verbally attack other members as ‘sick’ and ‘abnormal’; such behaviour was stopped and respect was discussed afterwards.

Non-disclosure of identity

Finally, in order to remain anonymous and protect the participants, all focus groups members were recorded using pseudonyms, and the questionnaire participants were given a sealed envelope to secure their answers. No identity or names have been disclosed.

Informed consent has been widely discussed in social science research (Bouma et al., 1995, Cohen et al., 2000). Howitt and Cramer (2000) also explained the principles of ethics and their importance. Participants have the right of freedom and so the decision to share certain information for the research, and their participation must be voluntary. In addition to the informed consent, a leaflet explaining this research was attached to the parent-teacher communication book, so that parents had information about the research, and the returned consent sheets were collected. However, there was a concern that some students may give consent when actually they may not want to, because of their sense that they were expected to do by from peers or teachers. Because young people like to act together, joining this survey

is also an activity that peers might have encouraged friends to do.

4.8 Summary

An explanation of the methodology helps people understand the process of the research and the methods used. Through the process of data collection, some bias might enter the research. In order to increase validity and reliability, the questions were examined carefully to avoid misunderstanding.

This chapter explains the methods and reasons for conducting the survey, as well as the approaches applied in data collection and analysis. Focus groups, semi-structured interview and questionnaires were used in this research to discover how adolescents were influenced by their peers, and how this issue was viewed by school staff. Adolescents from two high schools attended the focus groups to talk about their opinions on peer influences and romantic relationships. School counsellors and home teachers were interviewed to discuss their views upon adolescents' friendships and romantic relationships. A questionnaire was designed and given to high school students to gather information about peer influence and romantic relationships. The results of the survey were interpreted in the light of the research questions and emerging issues are discussed later. Analysis and results are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 : Findings of Results

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of this research will be presented in relation to the research questions and the research methods used. The themes drawn from the qualitative research include peer topics, romantic relationships, interactions and counselling service. These themes will be discussed in relation to the research questions and the data collection methods. The research questions will be addressed.

The research questions are:

- A. What influences do adolescents get from peers in relation to romantic relationships?
 - i. What are the factors contributing to different peer influences?
- B. How do peers influence adolescents’ romantic relationships?
 - i. How do adolescents get information about romantic relationships?
 - ii. How do adolescents perceive romantic relationships?
- C. Is there an influence from counselling services on adolescents in their romantic and peer relationships?

The following table shows the themes drawn out from focus group and semi-structured interview, and how they relate to the research questions. The theme of interaction

containing non-verbal information observed in focus group will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Table 5-1 themes, research questions, and research methods

Themes	Sub-themes		Research questions	Research methods	Discussed
<i>Peer topics</i>	Hobbies	Dating activities	A.	Questionnaire Focus group Semi-structured interview	5.2.1
	Fashion	Dating dress; Personal style	A.	Questionnaire Focus group	5.2.2
	Peer reaction	Emotion Couple making Physical touch	A Ai B ii	Questionnaire Focus group Semi-structured interview	5.2.3
	Peer influence on romantic relationships	Mostly behaviour	A.	Questionnaire Focus group Semi-structured interview	5.2.4
	Definition	Together Trust and love	B.ii	Focus group	5.3.1
<i>Romantic Relationships</i>	Romantic relationship	At least 50% of students involve	A.	Focus group	5.3.2
		Differences by age	A.	Semi-structured interview	5.3.2
	Emotion	Positive attitude Not for adolescents	B. B.ii	Questionnaire Focus group	5.3.3
	Resource	Friends	B.i	Questionnaire Focus group	5.3.4.1

		Media		B.i	Questionnaire	5.3.4.2
					Focus group	
<i>Gender identity and homosexuality</i>		Education material		B.i	Questionnaire	5.3.4.3
					Focus group	
		Existence		A.	Focus group	5.4.1
				B. ii	Semi-structured interview	
		Peer reaction		A.	Focus group	5.4.2
		Disapprove			Semi-structured interview	
<i>Counselling service</i>		Campus idols		A.	Focus group	5.4.3
					Semi-structured interview	
		Better than parents		C	Semi-structured interview	5.5.1
<i>Interactions</i>		Relation with teachers		C.	Questionnaire	5.5.2
		Keep from teachers			Focus group	
		SRE			Semi-structured interview	
		Expression		B.	Focus group	6.2.1.1
		Support				
		Yes men		B.	Focus group	6.2.1.2
		No strong mind				
		Keeping confidential		A.	Focus group	6.2.1.3
		Gossip		A.	Focus group	6.2.1.4
		Discuss other's relationships				

This chapter will be structured around the themes arising from the different data sources.

5.2 Peer Topics

Peer topics are one of the themes drawn from the focus group discussion with participating adolescents. These issues comprise young people's daily conversation with their friends regarding romantic relationships; these topics include hobbies, fashion, and peer reaction.

5.2.1 Hobbies:

Questionnaire:

- Dating activities—When I am in a romantic relationship, I like to go out with my boy/girlfriend with other couples vs. I prefer being with my girl/boyfriend alone

Dating activity is discussed within peer groups; young people talked about dating with other people and dating alone. Table 5-2 shows the result in regard to going out with other couples. The majority responded to this statement with uncertainty (37.7%). The ratio of agreement and strong agreement (28.5%) was slightly less than the amount of disagreement and strong disagreement (33.8%). Therefore, the result showed that young people in the survey did not readily date with other couples.

Table 5-2 When I am in a romantic relationship, I like to go out with my boy/girlfriend with other couples

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	16	6.6	10.4
	disagree	36	14.9	23.4
	uncertain	58	24.0	37.7
	agree	31	12.8	20.1
	strongly agree	13	5.4	8.4
	total	154	63.6	100.0
Missing	9	88	36.4	
Total		242	100.0	

Table 5-3 presents the results of being with boy/girlfriend alone. The majority agreed or strongly that they preferred being with their boy/girlfriends alone (51.3%). The proportion of responses indicating disagreement and strong disagreement was much lower (16.2%). Therefore, the results show that most participants liked to be alone with their boy/girlfriends. Privacy had become important in adolescents’ social life, and young people preferred to be alone with their boy/girlfriends instead of going out with other people.

Table 5-3 I prefer being with my girl/boyfriend alone

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	5	2.1	3.2
	disagree	20	8.3	13.0
	uncertain	50	20.7	32.5
	agree	57	23.6	37.0
	strongly agree	22	9.1	14.3
	total	154	63.6	100.0
Missing	9	88	36.4	
Total		242	100.0	

Gender difference in dating activities

Gender difference also led to various responses to dating activities. Boys and girls had different opinions about dating with other couples. From, table 5-4, it can be

seen that girls (M=3.12) tended to agree that they liked to go out with other couples while boys tended to disagree (M=2.74). Girls preferred group activities and boys tended not to, with a significance of $p=.031$. This shows that girls prefer to date with their friends and their friends' boy/girlfriends while boys did not.

Boys' responses revealed that they preferred to be alone with their boy/girlfriends (M=3.67). Although girls response were similar (M=3.26), the difference is still significant ($p=.009$). Therefore, it can be stated that girls liked to go out with other couples while boys liked to be alone with their boy/girlfriends. Boys saw dating as very personal and they preferred privacy with their romantic partners. Although girls' response revealed that they preferred to go out with other couples (M=3.12) they also liked to be alone with their romantic partners (M=3.26), indeed, the answers to being alone with romantic partners were slightly higher. Therefore, gender difference had some influence on young people's dating styles.

Table 5-4 Gender vs. Dating activities

	GENDER	N	MEAN	T-TEST SIG. (2-TAILED)
WHEN I AM IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP, I LIKE TO GO OUT WITH MY BOY/GIRLFRIEND WITH OTHER COUPLES	FEMALE	78	3.12	.031
	MALE	76	2.74	
I PREFER BEING WITH MY GIRL/BOYFRIEND ALONE	FEMALE	78	3.26	.009
	MALE	76	3.67	

Focus group:

Students usually talk and share their hobbies with friends, including idols, pop music, entertainment news and activities. A-go, a 15 year-old boy, talked of a new activity

popular with him and his friends which also gave opportunities to make friends from outside of the campus.

'Internet cafe! Very popular now! We go there together to chat with others and play on-line games.' (A-go, 2005)

Chat rooms are very popular among young people; a 'virtual-mate' was another issue that they frequently discussed with friends since relationships might be developed from this type of contact. Besides the popular topics and activities, students also liked to talk about dating with friends. Some students mentioned that they liked to go out with other couples, as this is a form of group dating.

'We like to date out together! We go to the movies, shopping, picnicking.' (Apple, 2005)

'It is not too embarrassing if we go out with other couples.' (Don, 2005)

Some couples liked to go out with other couples socially. Being with other couples made them feel more comfortable. On the other hand, in order not to make their single friends and their boy/girlfriends uncomfortable, they preferred not to go out with single friends and their boy/girlfriends together.

'I would give a hint to my friend not to come with us if he has no girlfriend.' (Yin, 2005)

This also resulted in the feeling of isolation that their single friends had, and single persons were willing to have relationships so that they could go out with friends as group dating. The feeling of isolation will be discussed later under the sub-theme of peer reaction.

However, the findings from focus group contrast with the questionnaire survey. In questionnaire, the samples tended to agree that they prefer dating with their boy/girlfriends than dating with other couples, while in focus group discussion, many of the participants talked about going out with other couples.

Semi-structured interview:

School teachers also indicated that young people's dating activities have become influenced by peers. Behaviour-related activities were commonly seen in adolescents' peer influences. Chen, an experienced home teacher, explained that students liked to go out together as couples, and their activities include going to the cinema, shopping and picnicking.

Thus, dating activities were seen as peer influences in relation to adolescents' romantic relationships which answers the first research question-- What influences do adolescents have from peers in relation to romantic relationships? Young people discuss the location of and activities on dates with peers and this affects adolescents' romantic relationships.

5.2.2 Fashion:

Questionnaire:

- I like to ask my friends' opinions about what to wear for a date.

This statement aimed to see if peers could affect what young people wear when dating.

Ninety students did not answer this question, and this was the majority. Those students who answered this question were evenly split between those who were uncertain about and those who were in agreement (31.6%) with this statement. This

indicates that many young people agreed that they consulted their friends about what to wear on a date dress and also that many young people were uncertain. Moreover, more students agreed that they asked their friends’ opinions about what to wear on dates dress (41.5%), while about 27% disagreed (Table 5-5). Therefore, although many respondents were uncertain, dress on dates was adolescent behaviour influenced by peers. This factor also relates to the conversational topics they share with friends; fashion and style are very popular among young people, and they care about their image and the impression they make on others, including those they find attractive.

Table 5-5 I like to ask my friends' opinions about what to wear for a date

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	6	2.5	3.9
	disagree	35	14.5	23.0
	uncertain	48	19.8	31.6
	agree	48	19.8	31.6
	strongly agree	15	6.2	9.9
	total	152	62.8	100.0
Missing	9	90	37.2	
Total		242	100.0	

Focus group:

Fashion was also an important issue for young people. Some students like to follow their friends’ or idols’ style while others insisted that they have their own ideas. Peers did seem to have a certain effect on adolescents’ dressing style. Manto explained that his fashion style had been influenced by his friends.

‘I will buy the same clothes when I see my friends dress nicely.’ (Manto, 2005)

However, rather than having the same style, other students were aware of their individual differences which would help them to stand out in the groups.

'I will see if that style suits me or not.' (Babe, 2005)

'We don't do copy!' (Don, 2005)

Don said this with pride. Some other students nodded while Don explained personal style. The students also mentioned that friends would give advice about dressing for a date. Apple and Babe talked about friends' contributions to discussions of fashion and dates.

'I would ask my friends before going out with my boyfriend.' (Apple, 2005)

'Sometimes, friends talk about what boys like and we will consider that while dressing for a date.' (Babe, 2005)

In order to have an appealing appearance and to impress someone they like, these young people talk about what to wear on a date and liked to ask their friends' opinions. They wanted to create the best image possible in their boy/girlfriends' minds; dressing up was the easiest and most obvious way. In this case, sometimes opposite gender friends could provide useful information, such as what a boy or girl would like. Therefore, the peers influenced young people's fashion style in their romantic relationships; which also provides another peer influence on adolescents' romantic relationships. The first research question has been provided with the answer.

5.2.3 Peer Reaction:

While romantic relationships had become a major topic in young people's group talk, and a large number of young people had been involved in romantic relationships, there have been changes. Friends' experiences and stories had some influence on

young people including their reactions to others’ romantic relationships and their own romantic relationships. There were many kinds of peer reactions where romantic relationships were concerned; those reactions included reactions to emotions, couple-making and physical contact. These aspects of peer reaction will be discussed below.

5.2.3.1 Emotions

Questionnaire:

- When my friends are in romantic relationships, I feel isolated.

Feeling isolated is one of the emotions that young people feel when their friends are in romantic relationships. These feelings have been known to act as a motivation young people to pursue their own romantic relationships, and this was evident in the focus group discussions. Thus, feeling isolated is an influence on friends’ romantic relationships. Table 5-6 shows that the largest proportion of the sample revealed uncertainty about feeling isolated when their friends were in romantic relationships (31%); whereas, 30.8% disagreed with the statement. Only 22.5 % believed that they had experienced such feelings because of their friends’ romantic relationships, while 46.3% stated that they disagreed. Although a some people revealed that they had felt left-behind and isolated, more of the young people disagreed that they experienced such feelings.

Table 5-6 When my friends are in romantic relationships, I feel isolated

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	37	15.3	15.4
	disagree	74	30.6	30.8
	uncertain	75	31.0	31.3
	agree	43	17.8	17.9
	strongly agree	11	4.5	4.6
	total	240	99.2	100.0

Missing	9	2	.8
Total		242	100.0

Gender difference in young people’s feelings of isolation

In the current study, young people showed that they reacted differently to their friends’ romantic relationships. Some participants reported that they felt isolated when their friends were in relationships and spent less time with their friends. With this particular topic, there was a significant difference in boys’ and girls’ feelings regarding friends’ romantic relationships. From table 5-7, it can be seen that both girls (M=2.91) and boys (M=2.37) tended to disagree with the statement about feeling isolated; however, there was a significant difference between their answers (p=.00). Boys showed a stronger denial of feelings of isolation than girls when their friends were in romantic relationships, because girls’ answers reported uncertainty about the statement. It may be assumed that girls like to talk about romantic relationships and have closer relations with their friends than boys; so, when their friends spent more time with their romantic partners, the girls had the feeling of losing their friends and being left-behind.

Table 5-7 Gender vs. Isolated feeling

	GENDER	N	MEAN	T-TEST SIG. (2-TAILED)
WHEN MY FRIENDS ARE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS, I FEEL ISOLATED	FEMALE	127	2.91	.000
	MALE	113	2.37	

Focus group:

When friends were in relationships, many students said that they felt happy for their

friends. Yoko expressed how she would like to be a supportive friend.

'I would be happy if I see my friends are happy.' (Yoko, 2005)

Students in the focus groups admitted that they would seek to have a relationship when they saw their friends happy in one.

However, some expressed mixed feelings saying that they felt isolated and left behind. They felt lost when their friends spent more time being with their boy/girlfriends. Besides, since they mentioned dating with other couples, some of them would have liked to have romantic relationships so that they could date together. This also resulted in their having relationships in order to be the same as their friends. Manto admitted that he always felt jealous seeing his friends having romantic relationships since they looked so happy together. Manto's words, given below, show evidence of peer influence.

'And of course I will long for romance!' (Manto, 2005)

Other students laughed and that made Manto embarrassed, and he tried to explain.

'Hey, I am the only one telling the truth here!!' (Manto, 2005)

Another girl, Vicky, said that she felt both jealous and abandoned, but that she always pretended nothing was wrong. Therefore, it is clear that there were emotional reactions when those young people experienced their friends' involvement in romantic relationships. These feelings resulted in their further development in romantic relationships; they longed for romantic relationships because they wanted to be happy, and they did not want to be left behind.

5.2.3.2 Couple-making

Questionnaire:

- My friends suggest who I should go out with.

This statement sought to find out peer influences on couple-making in adolescents’ romantic relationships. From the following table (Table 5-8), it can be seen that the majority (40.9%) agreed with the statement; these young people agreed that their friends had suggested someone for them to go out with. In total, 48.8% of the sample gave answers agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. On the other hand, about 22.7% of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Overall, the largest proportion tended to agree with this statement. Thus, peers are a powerful influence in suggesting someone to have a date with, and this results in couple-making.

Table 5-8 My friends suggest who I should go out with

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	11	4.5	4.5
	disagree	44	18.2	18.2
	uncertain	69	28.5	28.5
	agree	99	40.9	40.9
	strongly agree	19	7.9	7.9
	Total	242	100.0	100.0

Focus group:

Adolescents had encouragement from friends in romantic relationships, mostly in respect to couple-making. Friends always shared their lives with friends; the topics included the people they adored, secret loves, or the crushes they had, advice and suggestions were given by others. Many students talked about how their friends reacted when a secret love or crush was pointed out. Babe and Yin both mentioned that friends’ encouragement usually worked with couple-making.

'Friends always instigate, saying who is suitable and who is nice.' (Babe, 2005)

'My friends give advice when we are talking about the persons we like. Most of the time a couple was formed through this.' (Yin, 2005)

Many students approved of encouragement from friends to help make couples and boost a romantic relationship. The most common topics they discussed in relation to romantic relationships were couple-making, who suits who best and who should go out with whom. Most of the students revealed that their friends had encouraged them to be together with someone. When friends suggested that they be with a boy/girlfriend, the first reaction from most students would be approval. Melon indicated the main reasons why he might pursue someone his friends suggested.

'This is the problem about 'face'. I would prove I can do that.'
(Melon, 2005)

Other students explained that they might be brave enough to confess to the ones they like after being encouraged by their friends. Besides, adolescents also cared about how their friends viewed their boy/girlfriends; their friends would be happy to see them with someone they felt was suitable. In this case, couple-making became a form of approval by peers.

Another stimulant in terms of couple-making came from friends in relationships. Some students liked to date with other pairs and they wanted to see their friends having boy/girlfriends. Some introductions happened within groups. Dai explained the reasons she intended to introduce people to her friends.

'I want my friends to be as happy as I am. And they will not feel lonely again.' (Dai, 2005)

Mostly, the reasons for couple-making were positive, happy, having someone to look after, and feeling a sense of belonging and security. Therefore, the students tend to approve and accept introductions from friends.

On the other hand, a few students held different opinions about couple-making. They mentioned that they would not do exactly what their friends suggested about pursuing someone they liked. Yin and Don brought up their ideas about friends' encouragements and suggestions which they might not follow.

'No. I will see if there is chemistry or not.' (Yin, 2005)

'It depends. I am afraid of being rejected.' (Don, 2005)

Some students echoed their agreement. Although their friends pushed and encouraged, they decided that they needed to think about this issue carefully. Chemistry and rejection were the specific problems they might encounter. Some students insisted that they made their own decisions whether they would take action or not. Therefore, some students had a strong mind about deciding on couple-making issues.

Semi-structured interview:

In terms of couple-making, school counsellors and teachers indicated that introductions could be observed. Sue indicated that students with boy/girlfriends would introduce their friends to be in romantic relationships. Such behaviour is common seen as a peer influence.

Chen explained the couple-making situation on campus:

‘Once one of the group members has a boy/girlfriend, soon the others will be introduced to have romantic relationships. It is like a chain reaction.’ (Chen, 2005)

Clearly, then, school counsellors and teachers were also aware of the couple-making boosting adolescents’ romantic relationships.

5.2.3.3 Physical contact

Questionnaire:

- I want to have physical contact because my friends said that is good.

Young people tended to disagree that there was a peer influence on physical contact in romantic relationships. From table 5-9, it can be seen that the majority, 54.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and about 30% were uncertain. However, 15% of the participants mentioned that they were affected by their friends when it came to physical contact in their romantic relationships.

Table 5-9 I want to have physical contact because my friends said that is good

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	50	20.7	20.8
	disagree	80	33.1	33.3
	uncertain	71	29.3	29.6
	agree	32	13.2	13.3
	strongly agree	7	2.9	2.9
	total	240	99.2	100.0
Missing	9	2	.8	
Total		242	100.0	

Gender in physical contact

Analysis of the responses to the statement about physical contact and peer influence, showed a gap between boys and girls. In the following table (table 5-10), the result of peer influence on physical contact shows the significant difference between boys

and girls ($p=.019$). Although both girls ($M=2.29$) and boys ($M=2.61$) responded that they did not agree with the statement that physical contact could be affected by peers. boys tended to be more affected by peers than girls, since boys' answers were more frequently in the uncertain category. Therefore, gender difference was a significant factor in the reported level of peer influence on physical contact.

Table 5-10 Gender vs. Peer Influences-Physical Contact

	GENDER	N	MEAN	T-TEST SIG. (2-TAILED)
I WANT TO HAVE PHYSICAL CONTACT BECAUSE MY FRIENDS SAID THAT IS GOOD	FEMALE	127	2.29	.019
	MALE	113	2.61	

Romantic relationship experience in physical contact

Experience of romantic relationship is an important factor influencing young people's romantic relationships. In terms of physical contact, experienced young people gave significantly different answers from those who had no romantic relationship experience. This indicates that experienced adolescents talk about physical contact with friends while young people without romantic relationships seldom did so. Moreover, those who had romantic relationships were more likely to be having, or wanting to have, physical contact in a relationship after hearing what their peers said about the topic. The association is significant.

Table 5-11 indicates that those with romantic relationship experience were more likely to agree ($M=3.23$) that their friends talked about physical contact while participants without experience disagreed ($M=2.79$). It can be assumed that physical contact was

a topic young people with romantic relationship experience liked to talk about but young people without such experience did not agree that they discussed this issue with friends. The difference between experienced and inexperienced respondent is very significant ($p=.006$).

Table 5-11 Romantic experience vs. physical contact

	I HAVE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE	N	MEAN	T-TEST SIG. (2-TAILED)
MY FRIENDS TALK ABOUT HAVING PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH THEIR BOY/GIRLFRIENDS	YES	115	3.23	.006
	NO	121	2.79	
I WANT TO HAVE PHYSICAL CONTACT BECAUSE MY FRIENDS SAID THAT IS GOOD	YES	114	2.67	.002
	NO	121	2.24	

Further, when physical contact was discussed with friends, respondents with romantic relationship experience were more likely to agree about being influenced by peers than those without romantic relationship experience. From table 5-11, it can be seen that both experienced (M=2.67) and inexperienced participants (M=2.24) were likely to disagree that they wanted to have physical contact because their friends said that is good. However, these adolescents with experience were more likely to respond with uncertainty, and the difference between those with and without romantic experience is significant (p=.002). To sum up, young people with romantic experience were more likely to talk and were more susceptible to friends' influences about physical contact, while inexperienced young people were not. Their experiences might have made young people become more aware of their sex drive. In other words, once they were stimulated by others' conversation, they started to consider experiencing physical contact themselves.

Focus group:

Students in the focus groups mentioned that they has heard about physical contact in romantic relationships their friends had, such as holding hands, kissing, petting, and intercourse; they were rather hesitant to talk about intercourse and used the word

‘that’ instead.

These students kept this issue of physical contact personal and private. They were afraid that their other classmates would get know if their friends disclosed their secrets. In other words, they had experienced physical contact, but did not discuss it openly. However, they also admitted that friends’ pressure might be swaying their decision making. Manto explained how his friends might discuss their ideas and make suggestions to him.

‘Yes, my friends talk about that, but I don't have to listen to them.’ (Manto, 2005)

‘I will regret if she is not the one.’ (Manto, 2005)

Some students did not feel happy to see friends having physical contact with their boy/girlfriends. Babe mentioned some further influences of physical touch at their age.

‘The present boy/girlfriend might not be the future spouse, and there might be some bad influences.’ (Babe, 2005)

Generally, these students thought that they were the decision maker in terms of physical contact; no matter what encouragement and provocation were provided by friends. This was also the respect they needed from friends.

However, even though they said that they had the final say, some students still admitted the powerful effect of other people’s experiences. While they said no, their minds might have been affected without their knowing it. Yin, a 15 year-old boy, indicated his expectations about physical contact from his friends’ experiences.

'If my friends' experiences are very nice, of course I want to try.' (Yin, 2005)

Therefore, friends' encouragement and experiences in romantic relationships might have some influence on young people's physical contact. Some students were aware of the influences and admitted them, while others insisted that they were able to make decisions themselves. All agreed that this was a very personal and private issue that they kept secret and felt embarrassed about discussing. Because of this and the ongoing murmurs in small groups, this topic remained secret within the groups. Furthermore, the researcher was an adult stranger and an outsider to the group, so that they were reluctant to talk too much about physical contact. However, from their murmuring and eye contact with each other, it was obvious that they had many things on their minds that they would not tell. It may be that social and age gaps were too difficult to overcome. These young people may already have had the stereotype that adults always preached that young people should not have physical contact. As an adult and a stranger to them, I had the sense that a gap had formed between the students and the researcher.

Interestingly, the results of questionnaire contrast with the focus group outcomes. Respondent to the questionnaire survey insisted that they tend not to discuss intimacy issues with friends and disagreed that peers had any influence. However, focus group participants, after some discussion, acknowledged that young people are susceptible to influence from their friends. The difference may explained by the fact that young people had been talking with group members and might have reflected on and had insights about the influences of friend. So, although young people might initially deny any peer influence when friends talked about physical contact issues,

later see that the influences have been exerted imperceptibly.

Semi-structured interview:

In the semi-structured interview, Sue stated that physical contact including holding hand, kissing, petting and intercourse, is an important issue influenced by peers. Having such experiences might have been a means of becoming popular among peers, and young people are curious to discuss such issues.

5.2.4 Peer influences on romantic relationships:

Questionnaire:

- Peers have influences on adolescents' romantic relationships

Data from the questionnaire provided strong evidence that young people were influenced by their peers where romantic relationships are concerned. Most young people participating in the survey agreed that peers did have an influence on adolescents' romantic relationships. From table 5-12, it can be seen that 185 respondents recognised peer influence (78.4% of the sample). 6 people did not answer this question. So, it is clear that most young people participating in this study acknowledged peer influences on adolescents' romantic relationships. Friends were the persons they preferred to talk to about romantic relationships so that their friends' advice and expectations were motivations for them. Therefore, young people believed that peers had a powerful influence on their romantic relationships.

Table 5-12 Peers have influences on adolescents' romantic relationships

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	185	76.4	78.4
	no	51	21.1	21.6
	Total	236	97.5	100.0
Missing	9	6	2.5	
Total		242	100.0	

The Paradox in Peer Influences to Romantic Relationships

Participating adolescents did not agree that they were influenced by their peers although they recognized that peers might have an influence on adolescents. This was a paradox discovered in the questionnaire analysis. Participants responded differently to a rephrased question. One statement said ‘my friends have influences on my relationships’ while another stated that ‘peers have influenced adolescents’ romantic relationships’. The result revealed that young people responded differently to these two statements.

From the table below (Table 5-13), it can be seen that most of the participants agreed that peers did have an influence on adolescents’ romantic relationships (n=121) and only a few thought that peers did not have an influence (n=36). However, talking about their own experiences, 76 students agreed that their friends influenced them while 81 students did not think that this was the case. Therefore, 51 students believed that peers influenced adolescents but that their friends had no influence on them. In Table 6-2, the number of different answers is presented, with the significance between the answers being p=.000.

Table 5-13 The Relation between peer influence on adolescents and influences on samples

					My friends have influences on my romantic relationships		Chi-Square	Sign.
					Yes	No		
Peer have adolescents' relationships	influences on romantic	Yes	70	51	121	18.843	.000	
		No	6	30	36			
		Total	76	81	157			

Therefore, most young people participating in the research believed that peers had an influence on adolescents' romantic relationships. When they talked about their own experiences, young people denied that peer influence worked on them. There are several reasons why this difference may be so. First, young people insisted that they are the master of their own decisions, and that no one affected their final decision. They understood that their decision was based on their thinking no matter what their friends told them. However, looking into other people's romantic relationships, they could see that other people's behaviours had changed, and they assumed that peer influences lead to the behaviour changes. The difference is that these participants were directly aware of the process of their decision making, but could only see the behaviour pattern of others. Therefore, it can be assumed that young people see their own romantic relationships being their own decision, but they considered that other people's relationships were influenced by peers.

Compared to the results from the focus group, it was discovered that young people insisted on their personal autonomy in decision making. They believed that they had no influences from peers. Nevertheless, participants in the focus groups after reflection during the discussion acknowledged that they were in fact influenced by

their peers; however, the questionnaire respondents did not have the chance to reflect on the answers they had given.

Accordingly, both qualitative and quantitative research provided evidence of peer influence on adolescents' romantic relationships and the null hypothesis has been proven wrong.

Focus group:

Results from the focus groups with young people showed that peer influence did exist among young people in relation to romantic relationships which young people might not be able to recognise.

Initially participants denied that they were influenced by their peer friends in their own relationships, insisting that they could make decisions for themselves. Manto explained his opinions on peer influences:

'I am capable of making my own decision in my relationships no matter what my friends asked me to do.' (Manto, 2005)

At the end of the group discussions, however, they realised that they were influenced by their peers, including dating activities, physical contact, and couple-making. Reflection and thinking made these young people realise that peer influences exist among them.

'Well, it seems I really have been affected by my friends.' (Don, 2005)

Young people like to discuss their fantasies and their romantic experiences with

friends; romantic relationships are a major topic in young people's daily conversation with friends. They also discussed and shared information about romantic relationships with friends which resulted in influences on their own relationships.

A paradox has become evident in responses about peer influences on romantic relationships. Participants in the focus groups first insisted that they could manage their own relationships well and not be led by friends. However, they challenged other members about being affected by friends in relation to romantic relationships. Discuss questionnaire findings in reflection to this and refer to yes man

Semi-structured interview:

Teacher and school counsellors observed that young people tried to be part of a group by acting the same and following their friends' suggestions about romantic relationships. They noted that some experienced adolescents encouraged their friends to become a couple and to talk about the persons they were attracted to. Therefore, school staff also recognised that peer influence was an issue affecting young people's romantic relationships.

Xin expressed that peer influences did exist but were not as powerful as other people thought. She believed that students still had strong enough minds to have the final say.

'Most of the time, students would follow their friends' words because they want to prove themselves that they are able to do anything they like, as a symbol of being grown up. Likewise, they might also stand up for their own decisions.' (Xin, 2005)

It is not possible to establish how powerful the peer influence is, but all interviewees

agreed that adolescents take friends' opinions more seriously than in the past.

5.3 Romantic relationships

5.3.1 Definition of Romantic Relationships:

Students were invited to talk about what romantic relationships mean to them. In the beginning, they were surprised by the question and found it difficult to define romantic relationships. Don tried to explain but had could only use the following words:

'Romantic relationship IS romantic relationship.' (Don, 2005)

After discussion and encouragement, they started to depict romantic relationships in their words. Mostly, they talked about what they did while in a romantic relationship but the topic extended to what was important in a romantic relationship. The following quotes show that Manto, Dai, and Yoko had their own definitions of romantic relationships; they thought about what happened in a romantic relationship.

'Be together! Like each other!' (Yoko, 2005)

'Hold hands with the person you like.' (Dai, 2005))

'Share your life with someone.' (Manto, 2005)

Romantic relationship means a world of two. They also indicated that trust was very important in relationships. Gossip and rumour always existed around them. Once the relationships established with trust, they were able to face the world. Ling, a 14 year old girl, mentioned the importance of trust in romantic relationships.

'Trust is very important in a romantic relationship.' (Ling, 2004)

Chung, on the other hand, brought up another idea about romantic relationships with which many students agreed.

'Romantic relationships are not as romantic as what you think.'
(Chung, 2005)

Chung's words brought back the real world for these participants. As well as all the sweetness and happiness in romantic relationships, these young people realized that romantic relationships were much more than two persons being together. Trust and sympathy were elements in establishing a relationship and reality was also a factor that they could not ignore. Information sources about romantic relationships will be discussed later.

5.3.2 Romantic Relationships situation on campus:

Focus group:

Romantic relationships were a popular and exciting issue in young people's peer groups. They liked to talk about secret love, gossip about their friends and their current and previous relationships. Most students believed that about half of the students were involved in romantic relationships. A-go described the situation as he saw it about romantic relationships on campus.

'Oh! Everyone! I thought all my classmates are having relationships now. Sometime they just don't admit.' (A-go, 2005)

Students laughed at his words and some nodded. Babe thought a while and then

stated her opinion:

'About half of the students.' (Babe, 2005)

Many students agreed with Babe's words. On the other hand, Mickey had a different opinion:

'erm, there are only about 5 or 6 students having boy/girlfriends as I know.' (Mickey, 2005)

Other students responded that it was because Mickey did not know. From the conversation of focus group members, romantic relationships have become a common topic among young people, and the peers' reaction have affected adolescents in their own romantic relationships as will be explained below.

Semi-structured interview:

School counsellors and home teachers all revealed that there were a number of students involved in romantic relationships on campus and estimated that about 20-30% of young people were having romantic relationships. Chen pointed out that students in senior years were more commonly involved in romantic relationships than those in junior years. Xin and Eve also mentioned the difference between students' age and their romantic relationships. According to teachers' and school counsellors' observation and knowledge, many students already had romantic relationships; however, not many students were willing to talk with their teachers. Chen also stated the situation on campus and how she felt about students' secret affairs.

'Students think they keep their romantic relationships secret, but we just know.' (Chen, 2005)

Nevertheless, although the teachers knew, they had no idea how to intervene or whether they should. Further, all the interviewees stated that the sex and relationships education did not meet the needs of the students. They had tried to talk to students but they did not listen. This issue will be discussed under the theme of the counselling service.

5.3.3 Emotions:

These students talked about feelings in romantic relationships—happiness, sweetness, and being needed, all of which are very positive. Vicky especially explained how she felt about romantic relationships, which meant love in her definition.

'Love is sweet and happy; the feeling of being needed and secure.' (Vicky, 2005)

Most students said that they had had and they had heard many nice feelings in connection with romantic relationships, as Vicky had.

However, other students mentioned that romantic relationships were not suitable for them since they were still too young. Snow shook her head and expressed her feelings about having romantic relationships at her age.

'It is not good, not suitable.' (Snow, 2005)

After Snow, Ruth added another reason not to be involved in romantic relationships, with which some students also agreed.

'too early to have romantic relationships' (Ruth, 2005)

Although they had a positive image of romantic relationships, such as feeling happy and needed, they still had worries. A contradiction emerged when their first reaction about romantic relationships was positive but later turned negative. There are many reasons for the contradiction; one was the sad stories shared by experienced young people. Those young people had experienced the difficulties and conflicts in having romantic relationships. They understood the sweetness and happiness in love and they also realised that being in love is not as easy as they once thought. Learning from their own experiences had led them from fantasy to reality. Another reason could be the influence of adults. Teachers and parents often tell young people that they should not have romantic relationships which will distract them from studying and threaten their honour.

5.3.4 Sources of information:

There are three main sources of information that young people had for romantic relationships: their friends, the media, and educational material. Since students responded that the sex and relationships education was dull and useless which will be presented later, they mainly obtained information about romantic relationships from friends and media resources.

5.3.4.1 Friends

Questionnaire:

- I know about romantic relationships from friends

Young people prefer to discuss their relationships with friends and those friends with experience of relationships, rather than family and teachers. From table 5-14, it can be seen that the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they obtained information about romantic relationships from friends (50%), and about 21.6% of participants had the opposing attitude that they disagreed that they obtained information from friends. 27.4% of the sample were uncertain about this statement; they were not able to specify if their information related to romantic relationships came from friends. Therefore, friends were the main resource from which they got information about romantic relationships.

Table 5-14 I know about romantic relationships from friends

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	9	3.7	3.7
	disagree	43	17.8	17.8
	uncertain	66	27.3	27.4
	agree	110	45.5	45.6
	strongly agree	13	5.4	5.4
	total	241	99.6	100.0
Missing	9	1	.4	
Total		242	100.0	

Gender as a factor

Interestingly, boys and girls gave dramatically different responses for talking about romantic relationships with their friends. Overall, young people liked to talk about potential or actual boy/girlfriends with their friends. The answers to the statements will be discussed.

First, from Table 5-15, it can be seen that girls ($M=3.90$) were more likely to talk about the person they fancy with friends than boys ($M=3.54$). Girls agreed that they liked to discuss their fantasies with friends while boys were apt to be uncertain. Therefore, girls liked to talk about the person they fancy with their friends more than boys did, and the association is significant ($p=.010$).

Secondly, participants answered that they agreed that they liked talking about their boys/girlfriends with friends. Since only a small percentage of the sample had romantic experience, the numbers of valid answers was smaller. More girls ($M=3.97$) agreed that they talked about their boy/girlfriends with friends than boys ($M=3.14$). While in romantic relationships, girls were more likely to talk about their boy/girlfriends with friends than boys, and there is a significance ($p=.00$) between answers from both genders. Boys were more reluctant to talk with friends about their boy/girlfriends.

Comparing these two statements, the mean of girls' answers to 'I talk about my boy/girlfriend with my friends' ($M=3.97$) was greater than the mean of 'I talk about the person I fancy with my friends' ($M=3.9$). This suggests that when girls were in romantic relationships, they were more likely to discuss with friends their boy/girlfriend than someone whom they found attractive. On the other hand, boys had different opinions. Boys were more likely to talk to friends about the person they fancied ($M=3.54$) than their boy/girlfriend when they were in romantic relationships ($M=3.14$). When boys were in relationships, they were rather hesitant to discuss their romantic partners with friends.

The difference reveals that boys were more likely to keep their romantic relationships private while girls tended to talk with friends. Overall, boys and girls have many differences in sharing their romantic relationships with friends.

Table 5-15 Gender vs. talking about people they fancy

			t-test	
	gender	N	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
I talk about the person I fancy with my friends	Female	127	3.90	.010
	Male	115	3.54	
I talk about my boy/girlfriend with my friends	Female	78	3.97	.000
	Male	76	3.14	

Therefore, friends provided a large amount of input for these adolescents concerning romantic relationships, and that input helped establish their own opinions. From friends’ experiences, they also knew what happened in a romantic relationship and how to manage their own relationships.

Focus group:

Friends were the main source of knowledge for adolescents to know what romantic relationships are like. This result echoed the major topic they talked about in groups. Young people liked to talk about their romantic relationships with friends, such as who they like and who likes them and to discuss the relationships they know. From these group conversations, they also learned from other people’s experiences. Manto shared his ideas about friends’ experiences in helping him deal with his own problems.

‘Friends’ experiences are very helpful; I am not going to make the same mistake’ (Manto, 2005)

Snow, moreover, explained that friends exchanged ideas about the images of the opposite sex which improved their ability to communicate.

‘Yes, we know what boys are like, what boys like, and how to communicate with them.’ (Snow, 2005)

5.3.4.2 Media

Questionnaire:

- I know about romantic relationships from the media.

The media is another source from which young people gain information about romantic relationships. The following table, 5-16, shows that the largest proportion (40%) of the sample agreed and strongly agreed that their knowledge came from media. However, the amount of disagreement and strongly disagreement (34%) were also big, although there were 24.5% of samples showing their uncertainty. The result shows that slightly more respondents agreed that they obtained their knowledge of romantic relationships from the media than those who disagreed, but the difference was not dramatic. It can be assumed that participants did not find it easy to specify whether their information and knowledge about romance came from the media; the ratio of agreement, uncertainty and disagreement was quite similar.

Table 5-16 I know about romantic relationships from the media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	19	7.9	8.0
	disagree	63	26.0	26.6
	uncertain	58	24.0	24.5
	agree	79	32.6	33.3
	strongly agree	18	7.4	7.6
	total	237	97.9	100.0
Missing	9	5	2.1	

Total	242	100.0
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Romantic relationship experience as a factor

It is interesting that young people with romantic experience were more likely to have different ideas about the resource compared to those without romantic relationships. Table 5-17 indicates how the sample saw the resource from the media in relation to romantic relationships. Those who had romantic relationship experience were more likely to disagree that they obtained information from the media (M=2.92) while inexperienced young people agreed that the media provided knowledge about romantic relationships (M=3.21). The result suggests that the sample with romantic experience did not take the information from the media seriously, while those who had no experience believed that they obtained knowledge from the media. It can be assumed that the media provides fantasies and expectations for young people but most only believed the media’s information before they experienced their own romantic relationships. The result also reflects the focus group’s discussion. Young people in the focus groups talked about the information in the media but also indicated that these stories were not realistic. It seems that young people who had experienced romantic relationships were able to understand what a romance is and did not take the media information seriously.

Table 5-17 Romantic experience vs. resource from the media

	I have romantic relationships experiences	N	Mean	t-test Sig. (2-tailed)
I know about romantic relationships from the media	Yes	114	2.92	.045
	No	118	3.21	

Focus group:

Here some students indicated that they obtained information about romantic relationships from TV programmes, websites, and novels; in particular they read romantic stories. These romances gave them a wonderful image of love; they expected that their own romantic relationships would be like the stories. From the stories, they also learned how to please their boy/girlfriends; for example, how to be romantic and how to build a romantic atmosphere while dating.

However, some of the students felt that stories from the media were not true. They were mainly fantasy and illusion that would never happen in the real world. Although they did not believe the stories from media, they still enjoyed them. Ling indicated the difference between romance and reality.

'Those stories are not true. That is not the real world.' (Ling, 2005)

A few students echoed Ling's words. They saw romantic relationships realistically feeling that they were not only about two persons, but involved more issues. The realistic opinions about romantic relationships may have resulted from the discussion of friends' experiences and domestic problems they talked about in groups. Domestic trouble was one of the topics the young people discussed with their friends, such as economic problems, and parents' quarrels which made them feel that love was not enough. Moreover, friends not only talked about their happiness in romantic relationships but also the arguments and complaints. Sweetness and bitterness were both shared in groups. Therefore, friends' stories and the media were different visions of romantic relationships which had had an influence on them.

5.3.4.3 Education material

Focus group:

Focus group participants acknowledged that sex and relationships education is part of the curriculum. Teachers talked about respect, safe relationships, and physical issues. However, young people did not think that sex and relationships education was useful to them. Focus group participants indicated that the sex and relationships education was very boring and did not meet their needs.

‘What teachers said was just so boring.’ (Ling, 2005)

‘That was mainly the biological stuff in that class.’ (Snow, 2005)

Sex and relationships education will be discussed in the counselling service section.

5.4 Gender Identity and Homosexuality

At first, gender issues were not on the list of topics planned to be discussed but students mentioned it spontaneously and further discussion took place. When homosexual issues were mentioned in focus groups, most students were initially hesitant. However, the embarrassment resolved after a girl discussed her relationship with her female friend.

5.4.1 Homosexuality

Focus groups:

Gender identity has been an issue on campus which students and staff were all aware of but did not talk about it. Some students nodded and admitted that they have heard

something about homosexuality/lesbianism on campus. With the encouragement and support from others, Dai admitted that she was in a relationship with another girl, and she was happy with her.

“Yes, and I am very happy to be with her.” (Dai, 2005)

Other students showed that they were very envious since Dai have been smiling and talking about her girlfriend all the time. Don, who hesitated, mentioned his experiences encountering a different situation.

“Once a boy told me he likes me.” (Don, 2005)

Therefore, homosexuality and lesbian is not a forbidden issue on campus; it does exist. Most students in focus groups were very clear and sure about their own sexuality while school staff had different ideas.

Semi-structured interviews:

During semi-structured interviews, some staff discussed homosexual relationships on campus. Sue and Eve talked about homosexual issues while romantic relationships were discussed. Gender identity has been a problem in the school for a few years. Sue believed that some students had brought confusion into campus. The following quote showed Sue’s observation on homosexual/lesbian issues in her school.

“A homosexual student would introduce same gender friends to become couples but they are not homosexual.” (Sue, 2005)

Therefore, she worried that more students had started to get confused about their own sexuality. Sue also explained that some students had homosexual/lesbian

relationships but later had heterosexual relationships. It is to be noted that some teachers had stereotypes of some students whom they had labelled as “homosexual” and “heterosexual”. Chen and Xin mentioned that they had overheard students talking about homosexuality but they had not been able to talk to the students. Obviously, they detect that students keep this topic away from teachers. Some staff were worried about the students; they also complained the lack of proper material on homosexual issues.

5.4.2 Reactions

Focus groups:

Most of the group members hold positive attitudes toward homosexual/lesbian issue; they acknowledge its existence and think being supportive is the best thing a friend can do. Besides, some students also emphasised that true love is more important. The spirit of respect and human rights were also discussed. Don emphatically stated his support for homosexual/ lesbian people.

“I support them!” (Don, 2005)

Manto also gave his opinion on homosexual/lesbian issues.

“They are also human being! They have the right to love.” (Manto, 2005)

Although many students were open-minded and supportive toward homosexual/lesbian issues some disapproved. Those young people disliked the boys acting like girls; they referred to them as not-normal. Vicky bravely expressed her first feeling hearing about homosexuality/lesbian.

“I feel sick about that.” (Vicky, 2005)

There were arguments in the groups and the groups seemed to divide into three parts — approval, disapproval or silence. Although they had different opinions and arguments, they continue the discussion in the group for some time; but later, some students did not want to talk about homosexual issue with the others members.

Those students who had no comments to homosexual issues might feel it was none of their business, or they did not want to irritate other students by saying something since an argument had started, and keeping silence might avoid this.

While homosexual issues were being discussed, some group members started to murmur privately. They talked about someone they knew who might be involved in same-gender relationships. Some of them whispered and gossiped.

“Is he/she? Oh, I didn’t know.”

Their talking attracted the attention of other students who asked who they were talking about, they would not say which provoked more curiosity.

Semi-structured interviews:

In semi-structured interviews, teachers and school counsellors were very supportive and caring about developments in the students’ sexuality. Sue expressed her opinions about the situations on campus:

‘I, of course, will be supportive and non-judgemental.’ (Sue, 2005)

However, a sensitive topic such as sexuality was difficult for teachers to speak out.

Teachers' worries and stereotypes, as well as lack of proper assistance and education materials, have established a gap between students and school staff. Equally, teachers' eagerness to help also causes the distance. There is no clear approach for teachers and students to be enabled to discuss gender issues.

5.4.3 Role models

Focus groups:

Some popular students become role models for other students including their behaviours and interests; their followers try to act like the role models and like the same as their role models. Dai was one of the most popular students on campus and all the participants in focus group knew her. Many girls dressed like her, acted like her, and talked like her. Since she has openly talked about her relationships with girls, some of her friends were convinced that they also liked girls. Yoko said:

"like Dai; she is so cool and everyone likes her; of course I want to be like her." (Yoko, 2005)

A "butch", "cool", athletic girl might be an idol that other girls fancy, and some would act like her to be popular.

On the other hand, a rather gentle, quite and pale boy might be teased by others. The stereotype of what boys should be like is still common among young people. Don said,

"I have seen people bully them, saying they are sissy." (Don, 2005)
"but some boys are good at something, like academic or activities, he will be a hero." (Yin, 2005)

Therefore, certain young people could be examples that others want to follow. Role model is another factor that demonstrates peer influence in relation to gender identity.

Semi-structured interviews:

Crushes on the campus idols was the main issues teachers talked about. In interview, Eve indicated her worries and ideas about role models and homosexual relationships on campus.

'Sometimes the young people just crazily follow the person they adore, their dress and their behaviour.' (Eve, 2005)

Eve and Sue stated that there many students have formed homosexual relationships because they followed their role models, the campus idols or celebrities. For example, boys impersonate female celebrities in their behaviour and fashion. Teachers believed that gender confusion has occurred.

Homosexual relationships and gender issues, then, have become both sensitive and also common topics among young people. The opinions and attitudes they discuss may amplify influences. Teachers expressed their knowledge of and support for those sexual minorities, but also worried that young people might have been confused by others. The influences including attitudes and opinions from peers have been recognised and need further research.

5.5 Counselling Service

5.5.1 Relations with teachers

Questionnaires:

Young people in the questionnaire survey responded to questions about their relationships with teachers in terms of romantic relationships.

Table 5-18 shows that the majority of respondent disagreed with the statement that they would talk about the person they fancy with teachers (41.7%) while there were only 4% of participants agreed that they discussed such matters with teachers. Hence, it is clear that young people did not like to discuss their feeling for people they fancy with teachers.

Table 5-18 I talk about the person I fancy with teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	78	32.2	32.2
	disagree	101	41.7	41.7
	uncertain	53	21.9	21.9
	agree	9	3.7	3.7
	strongly agree	1	.4	.4
Total		242	100.0	100.0

Table 5-19 reports responses to the statement that the respondent would talk to teachers about their boy or girl friend. It shows that the majority of respondents also disagree and strongly disagree with the statement that they would talk about

their boy/girlfriends with teachers. The ratio of agreement is even smaller; only 5 participants agreed that they talk with teachers regarding their romantic partners.

Table 5-19 I talk about my boy/girlfriend with teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	51	21.1	33.1
	disagree	64	26.4	41.6
	uncertain	34	14.0	22.1
	agree	5	2.1	3.2
	Strongly agree	0	0	0
	Missing data	88	36.4	
Total		242	242	

Therefore, in summary, adolescents responded that they preferred not to talk about people they fancy or their boy or girl friends with teachers. This also emphasised the dilemma for teachers who believed that they had trusting relationships with students and that they could talk about sensitive issues such as romantic relationships, while young people rather maintained their privacy and kept sensitive issues away from teachers.

Focus groups:

During the focus group discussions, students spoke about the persons they tend to talk to about romantic relationships; students all said that friends were their first choice while teachers were the last. The following quotes explained the adolescents’ relationships with teachers where romantic relationships were concerned.

‘Teacher sucks! Teachers are too demanding and picky!’(Snow, 2005)

‘We have huge generation gap with teachers!’(A-go, 2005)

‘I’d rather talk to my family.’ (Babe, 2005)

Some students agreed with Babe but others insisted they only talked with friends. These young people strongly believed that a romantic relationship is a serious subject that their teachers would not understand and they felt they would receive no assistance from teachers. The generation gap and the stereotype of a teacher also resulted in the distance between teachers and students.

Semi-structured interviews:

School counsellors and home teachers, however, reported different opinions from the young people. In the semi-structured interviews, Sue, Eve and Xin stated that they have built up relations with young people and have dealt with students' romantic relationship problems. In some cases, school teachers believed that they have better relations with young people than their parents since the parents nowadays were very busy working and spent little time with their children.

'I have good relations with students; they told me about their romantic relationships that their parents were not aware of.' (Sue, 2005)

With their confidence in the trusting relationships with students, school counsellors and home teachers believed that they would be able to provide assistance in counselling service for adolescents and they were willing to help.

5.5.2 Sex and Relationship Education

Focus groups:

Young people indicated the inappropriate sex and relationships education they had had. Generally, they learned about physical growth and body changes in classes; however, the young people felt that these materials were only for academic studies.

They realised what they were going through from a biological point of view, but emotionally they did not feel that they received any support from teachers or the education system. A-go expressed his feelings about sex and relationship education.

'That is boring. I knew what the teachers would say before they spoke. (A-go, 2005)

Semi-structured interviews:

Moreover, school counsellors and home teachers also indicated the need for proper sex and relationships education materials. Although they were willing to help young people with their relationships problems, they felt a lack of support, and they also realise that young people had no interest in the current sex education.

Hence, although school counselling services stated that they are could provide assistance and information regarding romantic relationships, young people still remained distant from teachers and also felt a lack of support from the education system. The third research question asks: How do counselling services help adolescents in their romantic relationships and peer influences? The responses in the three sources of data on this issue have revealed a gap in the views of young people and those of school teachers and school counsellors.

5.6 Conclusion

To sum up, the themes drawn out from focus group and semi-structured interview provided guidelines for the questionnaire design to enable the research questions to be answered. The themes include peer topics, romantic relationships, and counselling service, which have been presented in this chapter to provide answers to research questions. It has been demonstrated that there is peer influence on young people's

romantic relationships. Dating activities, fashion, couple-making, physical contact all are affected by peers' suggestion and the experiences peers share with each other. Moreover, young people's attitude toward romantic relationships tended to be positive, especially those who have romantic relationship experience. Friends are the main source of information for young people regarding romantic relationships. Homosexual relationships existed on campus and also gained teachers' attention because they considered there to be considerable influence from peers. However, the responses regarding the counselling service on campus was unsatisfactory since young people would be reluctant to approach teachers about such issues. Sex and relationships education was also discussed and considered unable in its present form to meet young people's needs.

During the data collection activities observations were made in the focus groups and semi-structured interviews and non-verbal information was gathered. The interaction observed in focus group and personal conversation outside interview topics will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 : Reflections on the methods employed

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a reflection on the research methods used in data collection. Various information was noted down during the progress of the data collection. The interaction among participants in the focus group discussion has revealed additional evidence of the influence from peers. The way group members expressed their attitudes and opinions was watched and reflected by other members. The feedback from fellow members, such as facial expression and discussion, has also had influence on the group members.

Moreover, some conversations were noted outside interviews. School teachers claimed that they were open-minded and supportive to the minority sexuality groups; however, prejudice and stereotyping was revealed in the staff room. So, what the interviewees said in the interview might not represent their true feelings. Finally, the questionnaire survey only represents the result of the selected sample and at the time the questionnaire was completed. Due to the limitation of sample size, time available for research and the personalities of the respondent, the result cannot be generalised to apply to the whole population. Hesitation and exaggeration may also have affected the questionnaire responses. The issues related to the methods used in the research will be presented and discussed in the following sections.

6.2. Focus group

During focus group with adolescents, non-verbal information and behaviour was

observed, including young people's interaction and expression which have thrown light on the topic of peer influences. The interactions formed one of the themes of the findings which were presented in Chapter 5, and will be discussed in this section. The limitation of focus group practice will be presented here.

6.2.1 Interactions

Other than the conversations that took place between the focus group participants, the interaction among young people also gave much information about their attitudes and opinions on peer influences and romantic relationships. Such non-verbal data illuminated the peer influences that occurred in the focus group discussion and also provided evidence of the existence of peer influence. The interaction observed in focus group discussion includes expression, yes men, maintaining confidentiality, and gossip.

6.2.1.1 Expression:

Expression was the most common occurrence seen in focus group discussion. At the beginning of the focus groups, it was very difficult to encourage young people to speak. They looked at each other to see who had the courage to speak but no one seemed to be willing to be the first one. Once the conversation started, most participants looked at other members before and after they talked. The expressions accompanying the looks could be described as threatening, inviting, and approval. Young people had different interpretation of the expression from other members.

For example, when the young people were asked about their romantic relationships, they looked at each other and smiled embarrassedly. Babe felt that others were

staring at her and finally shouted.

'Don't look at me! You all have experiences.' (Babe, 2005)

The expression from others may well have been threatening for Babe. The looks from others made her stressed and more hesitant to speak. In Babe's case, she appeared to want her fellows to stop staring at her since she felt uneasy and nervous at being watched.

The looks from others could be seen as an invitation. Sometimes the one being looked at just stood up and spoke. Some people felt invited and encouraged by the looks from others. For example, Dai felt happy when she was looked by other members while romantic relationships were being discussed. Dai was happy to share her experiences and saw the expression of others as an invitation.

Expression also could be read as support from others. After group member had expressed their opinions, they looked at the others to see if they echoed their thoughts. When their friends smiled or nodded, they seemed to feel relieved that they had said nothing untoward. Thus, they appeared to be searching for their friends' approval. They wanted their friends to approve of what they said and were also worried that their words might irritate their friends.

Expressions on the faces of others, then, have a variety of meanings. However, how young people interpret the expression of others still remains a mystery. The same look made some people feel threatened, whereas others felt encouraged. The extent

to which young people care about other people's expression clearly showed that they were affected by other people's non-verbal communications.

6.2.1.2 Yes men:

Yes-men are also a frequently seen scenario in group discussion. Many participants did not express their own opinions and merely echoed other people's words. During the conversations, many young people nodded after someone stated his/her own ideas. But when they were invited to talk, they kept silent. Those young people were afraid of being the first one and also afraid of being asked about their own thoughts; therefore, they nodded to show their existence. Once somebody made a move, many students nodded and murmured 'yes' to show that they agreed. Most of the group members were yes men; they parroted what others said but they did not say it in their own words. For example, when students were discussing whether romantic relationships were suitable for them, when the first person said that romantic relationships could bring happy feelings and that he believed romantic relationships were a good thing for adolescents, many others nodded and said 'yes'.

However, being a yes man also means that these students did not have strong opinions. Sometimes they echoed a point of view; but they also nodded when an opposite opinion was discussed. Other people's words changed their opinions, which were not strongly enough held to be stated in their own words. For example, many students agreed that they made their own decisions no matter how their friends tried to influence them; then when another student admitted that his behaviour had been affected by his friends' words, others also nodded. So, those young people tended to take other people's opinions and only showed approval.

Therefore, the yes-men scenario demonstrated that young people could be influenced by other people's opinions. They were not able to state their own opinions but just followed others. This clearly shows influence from peers.

6.2.1.3 Keeping Confidentiality:

Confidentiality was important to the participants in the focus group discussion, and they also realised that they needed to protect their friends. The facial expressions discussed previously could be understood as warning young people need to keep something confidential when they were about to speak. When romantic relationships and gender issues were mentioned, the looks from other members stopped certain participants from revealing certain stories; thus, confidentiality was very important for them.

Some participants said that they did not talk much about their relationships to their friends, because they were afraid that their secrets might be disclosed and they would be teased. Most of them admitted that they cared about what other people thought of them and their boy/girlfriends very much; for example, the way their boy/girlfriends treated them and the appearance of their boy/girlfriends. Their image and status in the group were the things adolescents tended to pursue and maintain. Therefore, young people believed keeping confidentiality is the best thing a friends could do.

On the other hand, Dai was quite generous when other students mentioned that she was in a relationship; she was not angry when her relationship mentioned, while other students tended to keep their own relationships secret. Even though some young

people, such as Dai, were not upset when other people mentioned her relationships, most of the participants still preferred their relationships to be kept secretly by their friends.

Confidentiality is also a problem for this research. Some participants promised to keep their friends' secrets about their romantic relationships and revealed nothing; therefore, some important information might have been locked away in their minds. Nevertheless, although these students indicated the importance of confidentiality among their peer groups, sometimes they gossiped about their friends' relationships during the conversations.

6.2.1.4 Gossip:

Gossip was another major topic for these young people and could be seen in the focus groups. They were interested in and curious about other people's private lives and relationships. During the discussion, some small groups whispered to each other about other people. For example, when students were talking about how many students were in romantic relationships, some of them discussed in murmurs with their friends whether other friends were in relationships or not. The conversation could only be heard i.

'Really? They are together?'

The gossip went further when the sensitive topics, such as physical contact and homosexuality, were discussed. One small group talked with each other about other people's experiences. However when another member tried to find out whom they

were discussing, the small group fell silent and stopped their conversation. This also showed that that group of participants realised their friends need them to keep their relationships confidential, and they could not reveal them to others.

It may not be easy for young people to maintain a balance between confidentiality and gossip. It may be exciting for them to know about other people's relationships, but, they also understand that they need to support their friendships by keeping their secrets. These conflicting needs also promote young people's cognitive development and ability to reason and hypothesise.

6.2.2 Limitations in focus group practice

There are some limitations regarding the focus group practice. It is difficult to measure how much young people revealed in the groups. During the discussions, participants were under the pressure from other members in that the facial expression of others made some of them hesitant to state their opinions. The content they would have revealed was being heard by other people. Since young people said that they preferred talking about romantic relationships with close friends, it may not be easy to obtain their real feelings outside their groups. There might be different ideas that young people did not share due to the environment and the group pressures.

Furthermore, the personal background and personality of the participants might have affected the results of the current study. The two focus groups were carried out in different areas, and the data varied between the two groups. It can be assumed that the participants' family background, education status, age, and personality may have led to their different contributions. For instance, older or outgoing adolescents were

more open about discussing their own relationships and certain sensitive topics such as intercourse than other fellow group members; an example is Dai, an easygoing girl who talked about openly about her own relationships. The age could be seen as a factor in that the older adolescents were more developed in their psychosocial, psychosexual, and cognitive growth than the younger ones; this means that they could recognise the importance of peers, that they had started romantic relationships and also were more capable of structuring an argument.

In addition, ethnic background should also be considered as a limitation. Some of the participants lived in areas of native residents. Their particular culture and their social status affected these young people's views of the world. These young people appeared to view the relationships realistically and also have more of an identity crisis than city adolescents. Thus, these demographic factors could be considered as limitations of this research.

6.3 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews brought out information about school counsellors' and teachers views of adolescents' romantic relationships and the peer influence upon them. During the process of interview, some issues emerged other than material directly relevant to the research questions, such as the interviewees' attitudes; further some matters were revealed outside the interview. Those issues have affected the outcomes of the research.

First, what teachers said in the interviews might not be what they really thought about young people's romantic relationships, peer influences and gender issues. In the

interviews, the teachers all stated that they were very open-minded about students' romantic relationships and gender identity, and would be supportive toward them; however, it was discovered that outside the interview setting some teachers expressed different attitudes towards those students. An example is a private conversation overheard in the staff room where a teacher commented that homosexuality is abnormal. The attitudes of the teacher showed that such stereotyping and prejudice were held to against those sexuality minority youth. Ironically, 'saying is one thing, to do is another' precisely describes those teachers' lack of sincerity in dealing with their students; and of course, students may well be able sense the attitudes of their teachers which may have increased the gap between them.

Moreover, labelling was also to be heard in conversations among teachers, and prejudicial descriptions of members of sexual minorities were heard. Those students so labelled might have been treated differently. Those teachers might be unaware of their conversation and that their attitudes could damage their relationships with students. This also brought the light into the need for counselling training for all teachers who spend a great deal of time with students. Bias and prejudice are likely make students remain distant and fail to build relationships with such teachers. Therefore, labelling is not only a limitation of this research, but also an issue of counselling training for teachers. However, since this is consent research constrained by ethical issues, only the contents of the interviews could be presented as results.

Furthermore, only four school counsellors and home teachers were interviewed; the results can only represent these interviewees' opinions, and cannot to speak for the

whole population. Other school counsellors and home teachers may not express themselves in the same way as those teachers. In addition, the background and training of those interviewees might be another limitation that restricts the research.

6.4 Questionnaire

In respect to the questionnaire administration sample, time period, and location are issues that limit the research. Only seven schools took part in the questionnaire survey with a total of 280 adolescents participating. The results of the questionnaire investigation may not represent the whole population of high school students in Taiwan. The small sample may not be representative of other young people's opinions. Other adolescents from other school might hold varying ideas and attitudes. In addition, the survey was conducted between 2004 and 2006, and the results can only be seen as valid for that time period. Adolescents participating in the future studies might express different opinions .

Moreover, participants were still hesitant in answering questionnaires although the confidentiality and anonymity of the process were stressed in the introductions. With other students and their teachers present, some students clearly worried about their questionnaire being read by others and they completed the questionnaire with their hands covering the sheet. Those young people were evidently worried that their answers might be disclosed even though a sealed envelope has been given to all respondents and their confidentiality was stressed in the introduction.

On the other hand, there were some students expressed their opinions freely, telling others about their history, and also showing their questionnaires to others. Such

behaviour was stopped, and the young people were asked to seal their completed questionnaires. Some of young people might be exaggerating their relationships to show off to others. The exaggeration could affect the questionnaire data.

6.5 Conclusion

The data collection procedure not only gathered information pertinent to the research questions, but also raised issues about the methods employed. In this chapter, the focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire processes have been discussed. Many of the issues in relation to adolescents' interaction, interviewees' conversation, and various backgrounds of all samples could have put limitations on this research and have been reflected upon in this chapter. The next chapter will focus on the results of research and relevant literature; discussion of the implications will be presented as will be the conclusions drawn from the research.

Chapter 7 : Discussion and Implications

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the implications of the current research will be presented and discussed. First, findings from the research will be discussed with reference to relevant literature and theories. The discussion will develop from the themes drawn from the findings which were presented in Chapter 5: peer topics, romantic relationships, gender identity and homosexuality, counselling service, and interactions. Secondly, some primary issues emerging from the data will be examined including various aspects of peer influence and gender issues. Finally, recommendations and implications for further studies are provided.

7.2 Discussion

7.2.1 Peer influence on romances

Emotional reaction

Erikson's psychosocial development states that peer are the main social agency during adolescents (Erikson, 1965). The research findings support the literature in that participating adolescents showed that their emotions were closely connected to their peers, and it was also described how peers are important persons for them. Since friends structure an adolescents' social network, young people have various emotions when friends are in romantic relationships; some felt happy that their friends are in love, and some feel isolated when they friends spend less time with them. This emotion reaction demonstrated that young people's peers are significant persons for them. Moreover, there is little evidence in the literature stating that boys and girls

tend to have different emotional reactions when their friends are in romantic relationships which is consistent with the results from this research.

Peer as an information resource

The results in this research show that friends were one of the main resources through which young people learned about romantic relationships. Through discussion and sharing personal experiences, adolescents obtain information about romantic relationships. The results support the studies by Feiring et al. (2002), Moore (2000), Lingren (1995) and Feiring (1996) that all indicated the importance of peers in terms of providing information about romantic relationships. On the other hand, Vitagliano (2003) and Winn (1995) both argued that there were other forces more influential than friends, such as parents. This research has shown that young people prefer to approach friends for information rather than parents. The discrepancy might come from the different cultural background where Taiwanese young people have rather distant relationships with parents.

Debate on peer influence on romantic relationships

The results in this research have shown that there is a debate about peer influence on romantic relationships. Questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews revealed the powerful effects that young people have whereas focus group members insisted that they were cable of making their own decision despite what other people said. Moreover, a paradox was identified and discussed since it appears that many adolescents might be influenced by peers without being aware of it. First, the research results support the literature in stating that most behaviour studied is influenced by peers (Brown, 1999, Clasen and Brown, 1985). Other related studies

and this research result have demonstrated that there is a peer influence on adolescents' romantic relationships. However, there is limited literature dealing with about the debate and paradox. It can be explained as young people believed they make their own decisions but see others people's behaviours as under influence from peers.

7.2.2 Definition of romantic relationships

Participating adolescents discussed their definition of romantic relationships and defined it as trust, love, and company; they took romantic relationships very seriously. The result contradicts the definition of romantic relationships from previous studies which had said that adolescent romances are casual and based on sexual attraction (Collins and Laursen, 2004, Hearn et al., 2003, Feiring, 1996, Brown et al., 1999, Greca and Harrison, 2005). However, most young people in my study did not think that sexual attraction in romantic relationships was important for them. Some had a negative attitude to any intimate contact that might not be long term, and they preferred not to have sexual relations which might cause problems, such as unwanted pregnancy.

Moreover, these young people affirmed that their romantic relationships were serious, rather than casual. They realised that their current boy/girlfriends were serious partners, even though they may be likely to marry them. In this study, participating adolescents had a different opinion about romantic relationships from literature, and this gap is worthy of further research.

Furthermore, the study also discovered that the media, such as TV series, novels, and

the internet, is one of the resources young people use to learn about romantic relationships. The research outcome supports the literature attributing influence to the media (Mitchell, 2004, Ashcraft, 2003, Suzuki and Calzo, 2004). According to the literature, the media have provided examples, discussions, and fantasy for young people. However, romantically experienced young people tended to disagree that they believe the media and popular culture because they did not think that all the information from these sources was true. The debate among young people also showed that those adolescents were able to think about the consequences of different situations; Piaget's (1969) cognitive thinking ability was shown in their discussion. Overall, the results of the research are consistent with the literature; that is, adolescents may doubt the accuracy of such information. The belief and disbelief have caused young people confused in thinking.

Attitudes to romantic relationships

In this research, becoming involved in romantic relationships may have resulted in positive influences as the research indicates that young people so involved were more likely to have positive attitudes towards romantic relationships. The literature suggested that young people may benefit from healthy romantic relationships in their search for an identity, the development of their interpersonal skills, their search for companionship and in their desire to be needed and to care for someone (Overbeek et al., 2007, Sorensen, 2007, Greca and Harrison, 2005, Bouchev and Furman, 2001, Coleman and Hendry, 1999). Therefore, the research results support the findings in the relevant literature that young people do obtain support and company from peers.

Interestingly, gender difference was an influential factor in attitudes. Though both

boys and girls tended to think positively about romantic relationships, the study shows that boys had stronger attitudes toward the statement than girls. Moreover, experience of romantic relationships may affect young people's perspectives upon them. The findings of the research also confirm that those who have experienced romantic relationships are more likely to believe that romantic relationships are generally good for them, while those without the experience tend to think they are not ready. It can be assumed that young people change their opinions toward romantic relationships when they start dating. However, no evidence was found in the literature to support any association between gender and experience of romantic relationships. Why and how the experience could alter young people's thoughts is worth further study. Longitudinal research will be suggested to explore this issue.

7.2.3 Couple making

Young people's opportunity to date has been studied as a behaviour influenced by peers (Feiring, 1999, Lingren, 1995). The research results revealed that participating adolescents formed romantic relationships through introduction made by their friends and this finding supports the relevant literature. Peers act as mediators in young people's romantic relationships. Hence, the opportunity to date has been recognised as one of the areas where adolescents are influenced by peers. This is a consistent feature in both this study, which was conducted in Taiwan, and western literature.

7.2.4 Romantic relationships

Adolescents participating in the study revealed that they believed more than half of young people were involved in romantic relationships although the teachers and

school counsellors interviewed reported less than this. Both focus group and interviews indicated that more adolescents were having romantic relationships than pre-adolescent young people. The experiencing of romantic relationships starts in adolescence that supports Freud's view (Freud, 1977) on psychosexual development that adolescents start to have interests in opposite sex and be aware of their desire.

7.2.5 Physical contact

The research of Kaiser Family Foundation (1998) and PsysPORT (2003) reported that adolescents are powerfully influenced by their peers to be involved in intercourse in their romantic relationships and this is particularly so for boys. However, in this research, the results showed that most adolescents disagreed about influence on physical contact issues. The difference may be accounted for by cultural differences. As stated previously in 3.3.4.1, Western young people tend to be more into romantic relationships than Eastern young people (Endo et al., 2000), and Eastern people tend to restrain their emotions (Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde, 2007). Young people from different cultural backgrounds, therefore, might have quite different opinions about physical contact in romantic relationships. On this point, an example of the cultural differences can be given based on research in Taiwan, where there was a conservative society in the 1980s. Then boys and girls were not able to have conversations in high schools; many schools allocated boys and girls to different buildings and forbade any contact in between. Physical contact was considered a social taboo, meaning that even if a boy and a girl held hands, this was considered to be likely to lead to pregnancy!

The findings in this research showed that girls had a stronger resistance to peer

influence on intimate contact than boys, and boys tended to be uncertain about whether or not they were influenced by their peers. In the literature, gender has been discussed in that boys and girls have different opinions on physical contact issues (2003b, 1998). The previous literature suggests that boys are under more pressure than girls in sexual relationships which reflects the results of the current research.

This research showed that experience of romantic relationships resulted in a variety of opinions on physical contact issues. Those who have romantic relationships experiences discussed the intimacy issues and have influences from peers while those without experiences tended not to. Further research will be suggested for longitudinal study to investigate the difference between opinions on romantic relationships over time as young people have relationships.

7.2.6 Gender identity and homosexuality

Gender identity and homosexuality issues emerged as a new topic in young people's romantic and peer relationships. There will be further discussion in the emerging issues section later in the chapter. It was clear from the discussion and arguments about young people's attitudes towards such issues, that young people were able to state their opinions and think logically about the issues. Such abilities support Piaget's (1969) cognitive development that adolescents have the ability of hypothetical thinking.

7.2.7 Counselling service

Relationships with teachers

This research discovered the difference between young people and teachers' view about the relationships between student and teachers. School teachers believed that they have good relations with young people while young people did not share that view. The results conflict with the view in the literature that the current tutoring program has improved relations between young people and teachers (2006f, 2006e, 2003a, Chen, 2001). This research discovered that the opinion of adolescents is that they keep their emotional distance from teachers. Suuggestions will be made later about how counselling service could improve and be of more benefit to young people.

Sex and relationships education

Educational materials were recognised as a resource through which young people obtain knowledge about romantic relationships. The research discovered that although young people acknowledged educational materials they did not think they would benefit from such materials. The research results support the relevant literature that young people have difficulties in seeking information related to romantic relationships in the educational environment (2003a, Moore, 2000). Although the schools provide information, young people still find not it an approachable topic. The need for proper sex and education will be discussed later.

The research results revealed that current sex and relationships did not meet young people's need and teachers also felt that they were not able to deliver the materials. The result supported the debate on the current sex and relationships (2006c, 2006d,

2006b, Pao, 2004). Scholars, editors and adolescents have differing opinions on what young people need in the sex and relationships education. The available materials were considered rather boring by the young people while parents thought them too erotic and that they may encourage adolescents to have intimate relationships. Suggestion will be made later in this chapter for action to improve education materials.

7.2.8 Social level influences and interactions

Hobbies

Dating activities are just one of the topics where young people are influenced by their peers. Peers are the persons to whom they talked about romantic relationships, and so they also discuss what to do on a date and where to go for a date. The research findings showed that some adolescents prefer dating with other couples, and some adolescents prefer privacy with their own boy/girlfriends. The reasons why boys and girls have different preferences in regard to their dating activities differently is still unknown. Further research is needed to study on dating activities, peer influences and gender differences.

Fashion

Fashion is a popular topic among young people and many adolescents discuss their opinions on fashion. The findings of this research have revealed that young people like to shop with friends to get their advice and also consult friends about what to wear on dates. Black (2002), Lai (2003), and Halpern et al. (2005) have stated that young people discuss fashion with friends, so that their similar styles can be taken to be as a result of peer influences. The result of this research supports the literature

that fashion is one of the areas influenced by peers. However, the literature does not explain peer influences on what young people wear on dates. Further research will be suggested. Moreover, the care young people show about their image reflects the identity search proposed in Erikson's (1965) psychosocial development in that adolescents are eager to know who they are and derive their identity, to some extent, from other people's opinions.

On the other hand, although they consult peers for fashion advice, many participants believed that they have personal style that they did not mimic other people in terms of fashion. The autonomy of their opinions in fashion echo to Erikson's (1965) psychosocial development and Piaget's (1969) cognitive thinking that young people start to be aware of their identity, thinking about who they are and hypothesise about the outcome of mimicking other people's style.

Interactions

During the discussion in focus groups, interactions were noted and presented in Chapter 6. The 'expressions' and 'yes men' showed that young people care about their friends' opinions about them, and how they were seen by others. Young people felt stress, approval, and invitation from other people's facial expressions. Moreover, saying yes and showing approval were also the way they express their support to other members. Such behaviours support Erikson's view of (1965) psychosocial development that peers are the key social agent and they care about their image.

Moreover, maintaining confidentiality and gossiping also provide evidence that young people start to take the responsibility for what they say, and that they realise the consequences of gossiping about others as well as protecting their privacy. The

result has supported Piaget's (1969) cognitive development schema that young people have the ability of logical thinking and hypothesis. Adolescents are now capable of structured arguments and the discussion of different situations.

7.3 Emerging issues

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, a number of issues have been raised relating to young people's peer influences in romantic relationships. Various aspects of romantic relationships as well as the gender issues discussed by adolescents are to be presented.

7.3.1 Various Aspects of Peer influence on Romantic Relationships

A series of issues was raised in this study by young people in relation to romantic relationships and peer influences, such as dating outfits and dating activities. The literature suggests introductions to potential romantic partners by friends and physical contact are affected by friends; however, these adolescent participants revealed more about this. This section will discuss topics for further research.

First, dating outfits were discussed by young people who wished to make an impression on the ones they love. 41.5% of the sample stated that they consulted their friends about their dating clothes. Although the assumption could be made that young people are influenced by their peers in terms of their dating outfit, no literature has been found to confirm this situation. Moreover, dating activities were also a topic that young people received friends' advice; there is no evidence to be found in the literature on this. Gender is a factor in that boys and girls tend to have different

preference in dating activities.

Secondly, the results indicate that romantic experiences shared by peers had been taken as examples and lessons for adolescents. The research findings suggested that adolescents would learn from other people's experiences, and they also obtained information about romantic relationships from their friends. Romantic relationship experiences not only offer young people the examples of their friends, but also lead adolescent into differing opinions regarding romance and intimacy. Experiences are an influential factor in adolescents' opinions in romantic relationships.

Thirdly, another issue discussed by adolescents with their peers was that of dating activities. Boys were more likely to prefer spending time alone with their romantic partners, while girls preferred spending time with their romantic partners and their friends. However, no literature on this topic could be found to support this finding, and therefore further study of the cause of the difference between the genders, and what young people prefer to do with their dating activities, could be informative. Besides, it is also worth studying how young people manage their relationships, as the boys in this study preferred some privacy while the girls preferred being with other couples.

7.3.2 Gender Identity, Homosexuality and Peer Influence

Gender identity and homosexuality issues were raised in both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Peer influences may also have an effect on what gender identity young people have. In other words, they may be confused about whether they are behaving in male, female or neutral ways.

In the semi-structured interviews, school staff raised the issue of young people's gender identity being affected by peers. First, the behaviour of students with idol status on campus was mimicked by fellow students; for example, certain boys impersonated the performance of popular female singers. School staff believed that such gestures and actions did not fit in with the student's identity. They also argued that these students should not adopt another person's identity or actions in order to become popular with their peers. Such behaviours were observed to be an influence. Similarly, some girls in sport teams also had a few followers who admired them. Campus idols and role models may therefore have been setting examples for other young people to imitate, so that students' behaviours, opinions and knowledge were being affected. Furthermore, young people in the study mentioned that they had a desire to be like pop stars and campus idols. Young people said that mimicking their pop idol's behaviour would help them become popular among their peers and that being popular is important. Moreover, they also tried to follow their campus idols' behaviours. These young people usually adapted what they were wearing or their behaviour and changed to become more similar to their idols. Therefore, these changes helped them gain popularity among young people. Lastly, many adolescents revealed that they liked to be neutral, following their campus idols. Hence, peers seem to have had an influence on young people's gender identity.

Gender identity is a sensitive topic among young people; they might still be hesitant to talk about it, but the influences from peers have been identified. Same-sex crushes and attraction happened on campus, with some students developing a crush on more popular students. The feelings of care, love and belonging could also be found

in such situations this, so that a relationship could be formed. Therefore, the fact that peers do have certain influences on adolescents' gender identity should be clarified through further studies for a better understanding.

Besides this type of romantic admiration, labelling is another important aspect of young people's gender identity, meaning that it is kind of stereotype or straightjacket. Behaviour and interests may be labelled by others. Labelling happens in many situations, one of which occurs when adolescents' behaviours do not fit in with boys' and girls' expectations. Teasing and bullying were commonly seen on campus. Sometimes the pressure comes from school staff; young people were expected to fit in with the images of boys and girls that school staff believe to be correct. Youths who become labelled might doubt themselves or become confused about themselves and their identity. Their sexual identity may have been certain, but they then started to doubt themselves after hearing other people's comments. The young people in this study needed more support in searching for their sexual identity; some thought experienced adults as teachers might be able to offer guidance and support for themselves. School staff have opportunities to offer assistance to young people searching for their sexual identity; therefore, it is important that school staff hold objective attitudes and do not judge young people. However, this research also discovered that school staff members did have some prejudice against young people in sexual minorities. School counsellors and teachers' opinions and attitudes towards young people's sexual identity could be studied further in order to promote better services and assistance for the youth.

During the semi-structured interviews, it was stated that homosexual relationships

occurred on campus. According to both school counsellors and some young people who mentioned the incidents on campus, some young people were involved in homosexual relationships. In these cases, couple-making had happened as friends had introduced and encouraged friends to date some same-sex persons. Once a student had had a homosexual relationship, then that student would encourage homosexual relationships as well. Yet, teachers did not encourage homosexuality since they believed that other young people would follow suit and copy their friends' behaviours. Consequently, students argued that their teachers had stereotypes toward certain students and were prejudiced against homosexuality. Students felt helpless as their teachers did not accept students who had such relationships. Teachers, however, wanted to clear young people's minds to let them realise who they really were and that they were being influenced by their friends' choices and not their own wishes. The distance between teachers and young people has, therefore, been established. This dilemma exists on campus and is one that school staff are not able to tackle at present.

7.4 Implications

This study has revealed the participants' opinions on peer influences on romantic relationships, and gender identity on campus, as well as the observations of school staff. It implies that educational authorities, schools and teachers should be aware of how these sensitive issues affect their students' thinking and behaviour, and then provide guidance and sufficient support for the young people.

7.4.1 Issue for future research

The research has tested the theories, and hopes to have thrown some light on the counselling in education environment since few studies have been found. In Chapters 2 and 3, adolescents' developments in psychosocial, psychosexual and cognitive developments were discussed as were young people's interests in peer groups and romantic relationships. Again, topics associated with peer influences in adolescents' romantic relationships, and gender issues have been generated from this research. Since there is a lack of evidence in the literature which focuses on these topics, it is essential to have further exploration.

Romantic relationship experience and adolescents' attitudes to these relationships are considered to be influenced by peers. Furthermore, the influences can be assumed as being that adolescents would think about physical contact differently after they experience romantic relationships. Young people having experience of romantic relationships tended to have positive attitudes towards them, whereas those who did not tended to have negative attitudes. It is said that having a romantic relationship might change adolescents' opinions about physical contact and the positiveness of romantic relationships. Due to time and the financial constraints of this current research, the reasons why people changed their opinions when they had had romantic relationships have remained unexplored. Also, no literature could be found on this a topic. Therefore, further research could be suggested which would focus on how romantic relationship experience could alter adolescents' perspectives and attitudes toward romantic relationships. Longitudinal research could be encouraged to investigate the changes before and after young people become involved in romantic relationships.

The literature suggests that peers influence delinquent behaviours such as alcohol consumption, drug taking, and risky sex (Kiesner et al., 2002, Kandel, 1978). Also, this influence can result in teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and some emotional difficulties (Overbeek et al., 2007, Weisfeld and Woodward, 2004, Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2003, Spruijt-Metz and Spruijt, 1997). However, the current study contradicts these findings. The majority of the participants in the research believed that friends' opinions might not have had negative influences that the literature stated previously. Rather, they believed that friends' advice could be helpful and a useful resource and that they could benefit from friends' advice in their romantic relationships, such as by learning to communicate better. Thus, in order to understand more about adolescents' peer network and their romantic relationships, these positive and negative influences are a potential area for future study.

Finally, young people expressed the belief that peer influences were extensive; rather, they claimed that making decisions was a form of autonomy, meaning that they had the freedom to make choices whether or not they accepted friends' suggestions or not. Nevertheless, in the study, young people revealed a paradox in that they believed in peer influences on other adolescents but not on themselves. It can be assumed that peer influences do affect adolescents to a certain extent, but that young people might not be aware of these influences. Therefore, it is still unknown how powerful peer influences may be or how realistically the young people view their peer influences.

7.4.2 Practicality

This research has investigated the thinking of adolescents and school staff about peer influences on romantic relationships, and discovered that school counsellors and

home teachers were aware of the peer influences on how students developed or handled such intimate relationships. However, it is felt that there was a gap between the adolescents and the school teachers/counsellors: some teachers/counsellors may have dealt with their students' romantic relationships in an inappropriate way, and that may have made their students unwilling to talk about their real thoughts. In order to remove the gap, some recommendations will be provided to enable the school teachers/counsellors to develop a positive rapport between staff and students who seek advice from the counselling services on campus.

7.4.2.1 School counsellors and home teachers

The study observed school teachers/counsellors and examined their methods of dealing with adolescents in romantic relationships. The results showed that although young people did not like to approach their teachers about romantic relationships issues, they still hoped that their teachers would be able to provide them information. On the other hand, some school teachers/counsellors were aware of young people's romantic relationships but failed to provide the assistance for young people and some teachers/counsellors were overconfident about their relationship with adolescents. Therefore, presentation of their perceptions of adolescents' opinions could help school teachers/counsellors to adjust their roles.

It is important to ensure that teachers/counsellors have professional training in counselling. It could also be suggested that all teachers take basic training in counselling skills, since it was indicated in the research limitations that certain teachers had labelled and stereotyped students' behaviour, and that this made students distant. In Taiwan, the Voluntary Guidance Programme has been practised in high

schools, so that many teachers take care of adolescents. It is important that all teachers undertake professional counselling and guidance training. Young people should be able to obtain professional help with professionally trained teachers.

Secondly, it is important to set up a friendly environment in which young people can approach teaching staff, since young people mentioned that they were not willing to talk to school teachers/counsellors. Fortunately, the government has launched a programme to build up a friendly campus where adolescents feel comfortable and free to talk to teachers/counsellors (2007). Realising young people's concerns, school teachers/counsellors might be able to establish a comfortable and free climate for young people to discuss romantic relationship issues with them.

Experiences from other countries could be used to improve counselling services on campus. For example, the counselling service in the UK is independent of the school administration and has its own association (McLaughlin, 1999). Such a system could provide support and supervision for school counsellors. In Taiwan, there is no association for school counselling services, and school counsellors have no further support beyond school. Equally, being independent from the school administration system should give school counsellors the freedom and space to manage their workload. The counselling service on campus in Taiwan is still under the administration of high schools. It is difficult to promote counselling services when the administration focuses heavily on academic studies.

It could be suggested that school counsellors' position on campus needs to be clarified. In high schools in Taiwan, school counsellors are given teaching sessions in addition

to their counselling work. These two roles might cause confusion for their students. In the conservative society in Taiwan, it is believed that teachers are authoritative and strict, so that young people find their teachers distant and unapproachable. As a result, when a school counsellor needs to be strict in the teaching, and also approachable in the counselling session, it might make both the school counsellor and the adolescents confused. If the school counsellors could be allocated independently from school teachers, this might advance the expertise and profession of school counselling. The school counsellors should be able to concentrate more on their counselling sessions. The counselling service in the UK is a good example.

Since the influence of peers is recognised in the research, it would bring young people benefit if this influence were promoted in a more positive way. Black (2002) explained that schools can encourage friendship and positive peer influences to help young people. Hence, certain issues such as sex and romantic relationships could be addressed when young people feel secure with friends in group activities. Besides, peers could be an appropriate way for young people to communicate with adults. The power of peer influence can be used in the counselling and guidance service in schools so that teachers and school counsellors might learn about students from their peers, and also access information being given by peers.

Finally, a network should be set up for further assistance for the school. Links to organisations in society also provide further information for school staff when needed. Professional assistance from society could be helpful when school staff have difficulty in dealing with students' affairs. Moreover, school teachers/counsellors could be the bridge between young people and educational authorities. The lack of proper

materials on sex and relationships has been acknowledged, so school staff should raise this issue with higher authorities in order to obtain further support.

7.4.2.2 Adolescents

This study revealed the opinions of young people and how they have been observed by school staff. According to the theories and literature presented in Chapter 2, adolescents are experiencing dramatic changes in physical, psychosocial, and cognitive thinking, and these changes might cause them confusion and worries, as well as the pleasure of growing up.

First, this study has offered them the opportunity to realize what other young people thought about peer influences and romantic relationships. Many adolescents share similar experiences and feelings, and they should not feel alone in the developmental process. Talking to peers and sharing their experiences could be helpful for young people to cope with confusion and difficulty. The study discovered that friends could be the proper people for them to talk to since they share the same development stage and are probably experiencing similar things. However, some adolescents experience pressure and are hesitant to talk about issues related to romantic relationships due to the insecure environment created by being watched by others. Although friends are their best partners, sometimes they keep certain ideas private. Besides, this study also indicates that although young people consider their friends' advice to be very powerful and influential, they recognise that they still have to think for themselves. Young people are stepping into adulthood; they should be acquiring the ability of logical and abstract cognitive thinking. Peer influences might look powerful to others, but many young people believe they prefer friends' advice to their

acting alone. It might be seen as doing what their friends' tell them to, but young people have to understand that they have to make their own decisions. Friends' advice may be influential, but young people are responsible for their own decisions.

Moreover, this study has discovered how adolescents' romantic relationships and peer influences were observed by school teachers/counsellors, as well as what school teachers/counsellors would do for them. The result showed that young people would maintain distance from school teachers/counsellors; however, it also explained that school teachers/counsellors were eager to help. Although certain stereotypes and attitudes about the negative influences of romantic relationships irritated young people, they still understood that school teachers/counsellors were there for their benefit. The young people in the study also acknowledged the information provided in schools. Therefore, young people could try to open up and start to talk to school teachers/counsellors. On the other hand, if adolescents still hesitate to talk to school teachers/counsellors, they should be recommended to seek assistance from professional organisations in society. There are many organisations and websites offering information and professional assistance for young people, such as social welfare services and the Teacher Chang Counselling Foundation¹. With the information provided, young people should be aware of the various resources, both on and off campus, for them to seek advice and assistance in relation to their romantic relationships.

¹ Teacher Chang Counselling Foundation is a professional organisation providing counselling services for all people, and also cooperating with schools for case transferral (<http://www.1980.org.tw/>).

7.4.3 Policy making

7.4.3.1 Educational materials

This study discovered that adolescents seek from schools sex and relationship education materials to meet their information needs. Young people mentioned that they value information related to romantic relationships from school while school teachers/counsellors underestimated their function in providing such material. Thus, it will be important to have accurate sex and relationships materials on campus for young people.

The present sex and relationship material in Taiwan has had variable comment (Sun, 2006, 2006g, 2006c, 2006a). School teachers and authorities are worried that the materials might lead to the opposite of the intended effect in that they might encourage young people to become involved in sex or romantic relationships; however, young people revealed that their daily conversation with friends about sex and romantic relationships was even more open and direct than the materials (Sun, 2006). This difference has been recognised. The gap could also explain the distance between school teachers/counsellors and adolescents' knowledge. Therefore, it should be the authorities' responsibility to provide accurate and approachable education materials for adolescents, and also provide training programmes for school teachers/counsellors in relation to adolescents' relationships and development.

In this study, sex and relationship education is discussed by young people. Projects including sex, romantic relationships and gender identity are needed to promote young people's social relations including peer relationships and romantic

relationships.

Moreover, examples from other countries could be followed to promote sex and relationship education. For example, abstinence has been practised in the States with remarkable results (Kittredge, 2006, 2004); however, it has been argued that this abstention education would not work on those who already have romantic partners and other issues (Santelli et al., 2006). Although abstinence has been debated, there is still an effect from such a programme. In Taiwan, a similar programme was launched in some schools to encourage young people's abstinence (Jung, 2007). Learning from the examples from other countries could help to tackle the teenage pregnancy problem; however, the government should take other measures to cooperate with the programme.

This study gives authorities an opportunity to know more about young people's views and attitudes regarding romantic relationships, gender issues, and peer influence. The present sex and romantic relationship education needs to be modified. Schools and education authorities should discover more about students' knowledge and thinking in order to design proper and suitable materials for young people. The opinions of adults and the government also need to be considered.

Gender identity and non-heterosexual relationships are topics that young people also need to discuss. Although this study has discovered that school staff teachers/counsellors hold stereotype about sex roles, it is important to address the difference between genders and provide equal opportunities for both genders. Educational authorities could also promote gender education to emphasize that

everyone is equal in the society and labelling is not allowed.

7.4.3.2 Media materials for young people

This research has shown that the media and popular culture are the resources through which adolescents tend to obtain and discuss issues related to romantic relationships. The literature was discussed in Chapter 3, and the research results were presented in Chapter 5. Many adolescents in this research indicated that they obtained information from the media although some adolescents said that such information was incorrect. The literature also suggested that the information and advice young people have from these resources are passed among young people. Hence, it is important to have those materials examined to make sure young people can obtain correct information. The internet, movies, and TV programmes should remain strictly classified to make sure adolescents do not have access to inaccurate materials.

Moreover, further media programmes could also be suggested to provide information for young people. Since adolescents feel comfortable and also have easy access to the media and internet information, the government or related organisation could promote the power of the media and internet to provide sex education. Young people have access to the media and the internet when they are hesitant to speak to school teachers/counsellors. The materials need to be reviewed carefully to ensure that the information young people obtain is accurate. For example, in the UK, there is a number of websites set for young people, such as Young Minds (<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>), Teen Advice (<http://teenadvice.about.com/>), Teen Talk (<http://www.teentalkradio.org/>) and Like It Is (<http://www.likeitis.org/indexuk.html>). Young people can get information and advice regarding their relationships from these

websites. Moreover, teen magazines can also be a resource for young people. Parkinson (2004) indicated the impact of teen magazines in relationships issues. However, there are still few websites and magazines especially for adolescents in Taiwan, and so more are needed.

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter presented discussion of the research results along with the literature and research findings. Peer influence on adolescents' romantic relationships has been discussed. Although peer influences have been recognised by adolescents and school teachers/counsellors, young people still insist that they make decisions based on their own thinking. Secondly, emerging issues have also been discussed. Other issues generated from this research included various aspects of peer influence and gender issues. These topics are worthy of further research to discover the association between them and young people's peer influences on romantic relationships. Research limitations were presented to explain some difficult and unsolved factors in the research. School teachers/counsellors have revealed their attitudes toward certain students, but they stated that they would be open-minded about sensitive issues. Young people in the research also spoke hesitantly in the discussions, and therefore may not have revealed their thoughts completely in the research environment of the focus groups. The study presents results valid only in the area of the research and these cannot be applied to the whole population.

Finally, three aspects of the implications have been presented: those for further research, for practice, and for policy making. Issues emerging from the research need to be studied to enrich the literature. School teachers/counsellors and

adolescents need to be able to understand each other better given the results of this research. The relations between school teachers/counsellors and adolescents could be improved. Although peer influences on romantic relationships have been proved in the research, adolescents need to be encouraged to think about their own concerns. Besides this, accurate and correct educational materials are needed on campus to provide young people with assistance. Media and internet programmes have also been suggested to provide further recourse for young people. With greater cooperation between school teacher/counsellors, education authorities and associated organisations, adolescents' mental health and sex and relationship education could be advanced.

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Appendix

Ethical Assurance for Social Research in Government

Principle 1: Sound application and conduct of social research methods, and interpretation of the findings

Social research conducted by or for government should be based on sound research methods that are appropriate to the research question and carried out to the highest standards of quality. Social research conducted by or for government should aim to meet a clearly defined, legitimate and unmet need to inform the conduct of government business. Those responsible for conducting or commissioning government social research should avoid placing an unnecessary burden on respondents. The evidence emerging from government sponsored social research should be brought to the attention of policy makers and other users in a way that is clear and accessible, as well as conforming to professional and ethical standards to protect against distortion and bias in the interpretation of findings.

Principle 2: Participation based on informed consent

Participants in any research study involving primary data collection must be asked for their consent to take part unless the law **requires** participation, as with the Census. In other cases, it should be clear that participation is voluntary and that they have the right to refuse to answer individual questions or to withdraw from the research process at any point, for whatever reason. Potential participants should not in any way feel pressurised to take part in social research.

They must be given sufficient information to enable them to make an informed decision. Participants' agreement should also be sought before equipment (such as a video or a tape recorder) is used. In some contexts, additional consent may need to be obtained after the completion of research fieldwork if, for example, presentation of raw data is necessary and warranted at a conference, or if additional research is to be conducted that goes beyond the use for which informed consent was given. Covert research raises particular ethical and legal concerns and should be approached very carefully. Where covert research is planned it must be subjected to rigorous independent ethical review, and legal advice should be sought before it is conducted.

Consent may need to be renegotiated where respondents are being re-interviewed, and researchers must disclose the source of the original sample if respondents request this. Special considerations apply to interviewing children and vulnerable adults who may not have capacity to give valid, informed consent.

The Information Commissioner advises, in relation to obtaining consent for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998, that there should be some active indication that consent has been given. As a minimum, researchers must ensure that they can demonstrate that they have fully informed potential respondents about the nature and purpose of the study that of achieving this is through leaflets. Researchers should also consider whether written evidence of consent is appropriate. Participants may request

that their personal data be destroyed and may in some cases have the right to have it destroyed, under the Data Protection Act 1998. Participants may also request copies of research data relating to them via Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act 1998, or a request under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

Secondary data analysis, including systematic reviews and research synthesis, must be conducted in a way that is consistent with the respondent consent given in the original study.

If individuals choose to take part in research, their consent should be freely given. Any information likely to affect a respondent's willingness to participate should be provided. Participants should be neither overwhelmed nor inadequately informed. Relevant information includes the purpose and nature of the research, who is undertaking it, who the sponsor is, and plans for dissemination/feedback. Participants should be informed of any features which might particularly affect them. Any consequences of participation should also be explained. Written information that is intended for participants' use should be produced in 'plain English' and in an appropriate font size (size 14+ for those with visual difficulties). Where relevant, potential participants should also have access to material produced in minority ethnic languages, Braille or on audiocassette.

Children

Legally, the age at which a child has capacity to consent will depend on the circumstances. For government sponsored research, parents or legal guardians must be approached for consent for children aged under 16 to participate in research. In addition to parental consent, reasonable efforts must be made to inform children under 16 about the purpose of the research and seek their consent to participate. Children under the age of 16 should be accompanied during interviews.

Children who are 16 or over will usually be able to give their own consent but even where this is so, researchers should consider whether it is also appropriate for parents, guardians or other appropriate gatekeepers (e.g. schools) to be informed when their child has been invited to participate in research.

Principle 3: Enabling participation

The potential impact of choices in research design (such as sample design, data collection method and so on) on participation should be considered. In particular, the effect of research design on such groups as ethnic minorities, those with caring responsibilities, and those with physical or mental impairment should be considered. Consideration should be given to issues likely to act as a barrier to participation, and reasonable steps taken to address these. Possible measures include:

- Assistance with costs incurred in research participation: - e.g. help with childcare, or transport costs etc.
- Provision of services: e.g. transport to and from the venue for those with accessibility/mobility problems; provision of interpretation facilities/foreign language interviews; induction loops for those with hearing impairment etc.

- Methods of data collection: e.g. offering a choice between self completion and interviewer assisted interviewing in projects where respondents have difficulty reading or comprehending written material.
- Sample design: e.g. considering the implications of excluding sparsely populated areas in highly clustered sample designs; and considering the case for over-sampling under-represented or hard-to-reach groups.
- User-involvement: e.g. consulting hard-to-reach groups and/or their representatives on research design to ensure that possible barriers to participation are identified and minimised.

Principle 4: Avoidance of personal and social harm

Individual research subjects⁴ (and the wider social groups or organisations to which they belong) and researchers should have their physical, social and psychological well-being protected at all stages of the research process. A research participant may feel wronged if: the research is inappropriately intrusive (in terms of method, relevance to the research question, or time commitment); it raises false hopes; their reputation is adversely affected; or if they experience avoidable anxiety or distress. The risk of perceived intrusion can be minimised by avoiding unnecessarily long interviews (although this needs to be balanced against the need to give adequate time on sensitive topics and/or to vulnerable participants), ensuring the research methods are appropriate to the research question being addressed, and ensuring that the time participants give to government research is spent providing information that is clearly needed and not available from other sources. The conduct of research should be sensitive to participants' 'private space', particularly when undertaking observation studies, and should respect participants' privacy.

Researchers should try to anticipate and guard against any possible harmful consequences of participation in research. This includes ensuring that interviewers have been properly trained and appropriate employment checks (ie Criminal Records Bureau/Disclosure Scotland) have been undertaken, especially where research involves vulnerable respondents. Relevant checks must be undertaken where research involves children⁵.

Those conducting or commissioning research on behalf of government should minimise – and avoid where possible – any likely annoyance or distress resulting from the research process. Where there is a high potential risk of distress (e.g. interviewing victims of crime), it is particularly important to ensure that the information is clearly needed and cannot be obtained by other means. In cases where there is high risk of distress, consideration should be given to provision of post-interview support for respondents and interviewers. The impact of the research on non-participating members of the target group should also be considered.

An objective assessment of potential personal or social harms should be included in the research proposal. This assessment should, where relevant, include: procedures for dealing with disclosures of abuse; means of protecting participants and researchers from undue stress, loss of self-esteem, or psychological injury; and procedures for assessing interview sites, recruitment methods and whether potential participants are under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of interview.

Principle 5: Non disclosure of identity

The identity of, and data belonging to, participants and potential participants (including information about the decision whether or not to participate) should be protected throughout the research process – including respondent recruitment, data collection, data storage, analysis and reporting. Even if research participants are not concerned about data disclosure, researchers should uphold principles of confidentiality and data protection and maintain the security of personal data and participants' anonymity (e.g. by ensuring that participants are not identified or identifiable in the outputs of research). Clear and transparent procedures should be developed to protect the identities of those who are identified through third parties (e.g. in snowball sampling, or sampling from administrative records). Participants' names and addresses should be kept secure and separate from their responses to help reduce the likelihood of breaches of security and anonymity⁶.

Research findings must not be used for purposes other than those they were collected for – e.g. marketing, advertising, and training. Where anonymous data is to be used for secondary data analysis, particular care must be taken to ensure that the further analysis retains the anonymity of respondents. Special care should be taken with small or very localised samples, and with the rich data generated by qualitative research, which may enable individuals to be identified from their characteristics alone.

If in any case there is doubt as to whether consent is sufficient, whether further consent is required, or about the purpose for which data can be used or disclosed, it is recommended that legal advice is taken.

Consent form-- focus group

「Focus group: young people's peer influences and their romantic relationships」

Consent form

Ming-Chin HSIN, from Newcastle University, UK, will carry out a focus group for adolescents to discuss young people's romantic relationships and their peer relations. I agree that my child may join this research.

A. Time: 30 November, 2005

B. Venue: group counselling room in school

Signature:

Date :

Ming-chin HSIN
Ming-chin.hsin@ncl.ac.uk

「青少年同儕影響與戀愛關係焦點團體」
家長同意書

我本人_____，茲同意子女_____參加學校輔導室與新堡大學博士班研究生辛旻靜所舉辦的「青少年同儕影響與戀愛關係焦點團體」，以探討現今青少年對同儕相處與兩性/同性交往之間的關係。

(一) 活動時間：2005 年 11 月 30 日

(二) 活動地點：團體輔導室。

(三) 活動方式：由新堡大學博士研究生帶領，與青少年討論

有關同儕影響力與兩性/同性交往議題。

此致

家長簽名：_____

日 期：_____

Consent form-- Questionnaire Survey

「 Questionnaire survey: young people’s peer influences and their romantic relationships 」

Consent form

Ming-Chin HSIN, from Newcastle University, UK, will carry out a questionnaire survey targeting young people’s romantic relationships and their peer relations. I agree my child may join this research.

A. Time: 30 November, 2005

B. Venue: classroom

Signature: _____
Date : _____

Ming-chin HSIN
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Consent form for questionnaire survey-Chinese vision

「青少年同儕影響與戀愛關係問券調查」
家長同意書

我本人 _____，茲同意子女 _____ 參加學校輔導室與新堡大學博士班研究生辛旻靜所舉辦的「青少年同儕影響與戀愛關係問券調查」，以探討現今青少年對同儕相處與兩性/同性交往之間的關係。

- (一) 活動時間：2006 年 11 月 30 日
- (二) 活動地點：原班教室。
- (三) 活動方式：由新堡大學博士研究生帶領，與青少年討論有關同儕影響力與兩性/同性交往議題。

此致

家長簽名： _____
日 期： _____

Structure of Focus Groups

Topic:

How do peers influence Taiwanese teenagers' attitudes toward romantic relationships and gender issues?

Purpose:

The purpose of the focus group interviews is to explore teenagers' opinions toward romantic relationships and gender issues with the influences from peers. Issues about relationships and friendships will be revealed through the interaction and discussion.

Goals of this focus group:

- Develop a general idea about teenagers' world of relationships.
- Identify the issues that could be influenced by peers in teenagers' relationships.
- Explore the peer influences affecting teenagers' attitudes or opinions on relationships.

Time: Late November 2005

Venue:

Counselling room in JYi Junior High School, Nantou County, Taiwan

Counselling room in JS High School, Taipei County, Taiwan

Participants: 10 students in each group

Introduction

Welcome and explain the purpose of this focus group to the participants. The procedure of focus group and guidelines will also be addressed in introduction.

Guidelines

You do not need to speak in any particular order. When you have something to say, please do so.

Please do not speak while someone else is talking.

Remember there are many people in the group and it is important to obtain everyone's opinions.

You don't need to agree with others.

Because we have limited time together, I may need to stop or redirect you to our discussion.

Warm-up

Set up an easy and comfortable atmosphere

Introduce myself to the group and let the member introduce themselves.

Participants' backgrounds information will be obtained.

Clarification of Terms

Establish the knowledge base of key terms through questions

Provide definitions of key terms

In your own words, what would you say romantic relationship means?
What do you know about romantic relationships?
What do you know about peer influence?

Establish easy and non-threatening questions

The initial questions should be general and less threatening
What do you talk about in peer groups?
Do you talk about relationships in groups? What do you talk about?
Do your friends give suggestions about relationships? What do they suggest?

More difficult questions

The more difficult or personal questions should be determined
Do your friends' experiences and expectations influence your decision about relationships?
Have you been influenced by peers in terms of relationships?
What kind of peer influences do you think there are when having a romantic relationship?
How do you feel when you are influenced by peers in romantic relationships?
Why would you follow friends' advice? or why not?
How you feel about peer influences upon your relationships?

Wrap-up

Summarize the major themes from the participant's responses
Ensure that any conversational points not completed are mentioned

What would you like to add to the summary?

Member check

Determine how each member perceives selected issues

Identify some key discussion points and find out what each of the group feel by checking with each member.

How many of you feel peer influences would be so powerful in romantic relationships that teenagers might follow their friends?

How many of you believe that teenagers can make their own decision in relationships issues?

Closing statement

Request anonymity of information

Answer any remaining questions

Express thanks to participants

Remind each of the group that the audiotape will be transcribed and kept anonymous. Show respect for each member.

Thank you for your contribution to this project

Peer Pressure Inventory

B. Bradford Brown
 Univ of WI-Madison

Donna Rae Clasen
 Univ of WI-Whitewater

Here are some *PAIRS of STATEMENTS* describing *PEER PRESSURE* -- which is when your friends encourage you *to do* something or to *not do* something else. For each pair, *READ* both statements and decide whether friends mostly encourage you to do the one on the *LEFT* or the one on the *RIGHT*. Then, *MARK AN "X"* in one of the boxes on the side toward the statement you choose, depending on *HOW MUCH* your friends encourage you to do that ("*A Little*," "*Somewhat*" or "*A Lot*"). If you think there's *no* pressure from friends to do *either* statement, mark the middle ("*No Pressure*") box.

Remember, mark *just ONE* "*X*" for *each* pair of statements.

HOW STRONG is the pressure from your FRIENDS to:	LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO PRESSURE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	LOT	Or to:
Study hard, do your homework, etc.	3	2	1	S-38	-1	-2	-3	NOT study or do homework
Take DIFFERENT classes than your friends take	-3	-2	-1	C-23	1	2	3	Take the SAME classes that your friends take
Smoke marijuana	3	2	1	M59	-1	-2	-3	NOT smoke marijuana
Be social, do things with other people	3	2	1	P-39	-1	-2	-3	NOT be social, do things by yourself
NOT try to be "tough," stay out of fights, etc.	-3	-2	-1	M42	1	2	3	Try to be "tough," pick fights, etc.
Be part of any "crowd" at school that you want to	-3	-2	-1		1	2	3	Try to get into certain "crowds" and not others
Try to do what your parents want you to do	3	2	1	F-52	-1	-2	-3	Go against your parents' wishes
Have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend (opposite sex)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT just go out with one guy or girl
Drink beer or liquor	3	2	1	M65	-1	-2	-3	NOT drink beer or liquor
NOT do many things with your family	-3	-2	-1	F-41	1	2	3	DO lots of things with your family
NOT go to school dances or mixers	-3	-2	-1	P-21	1	2	3	Go to school dances or mixers

Be part of one (or more) of the “crowds” at school	3	2	1	C-35	-1	-2	-3	NOT be part of any of the “crowds” at school
NOT have a part-time job	-3	-2	-1		1	2	3	Have a part-time job
Get home by the time your parents say you should be	3	2	1	F-47	-1	-2	-3	Stay out past the curfew time your parents set
HOW STRONG is the pressure from your FRIENDS to:	LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO PRESSURE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	LOT	Or to:
Excel, be really good at something (sports, grades, slamming beers, whatever)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT be better than any of your friends at something
NOT go to parties	-3	-2	-1	P-53	1	2	3	Go to parties
Take accelerated (advanced level) classes	3	2	1	S-35	-1	-2	-3	NOT take accelerated (advanced level) classes
Try NOT to be friends with the popular kids	-3	-2	-1	C-30	1	2	3	Try to be friends with the “popular” kids
Wear the SAME types of clothes your friends wear	3	2	1	C-36	-1	-2	-3	Wear styles of clothes DIFFERENT than your friends
“Make out” (kissing or petting)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT “make out” (kissing or petting)
Smoke cigarettes	3	2	1	M59	-1	-2	-3	NOT smoke cigarettes
Try to look or act older than you are	-3	-2	-1		1	2	3	Try to look or act your own age
Finish high school	3	2	1	S-39	-1	-2	-3	Drop out of school
Be in religious activities (church, Young Life, etc.)	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT get involved with religious activities
Talk or act DIFFERENTLY than your friends do	-3	-2	-1	C-41	1	2	3	Talk or act the SAME way your friends do
Spend your free time alone or with your family	-3	-2	-1	P-34	1	2	3	Spend your free time with your friends
Get drunk or get “a buzz”	3	2	1	M71	-1	-2	-3	NOT get drunk
NOT shoplift or steal anything	-3	-2	-1	M50	1	2	3	Steal something (shoplift, raid a locker, etc.)
Not to be TOO much of a “brain”	-3	-2	-1	S-32	1	2	3	Be as smart as you can be
Go out with boys/girls (opposite sex)	3	2	1	P-52	-1	-2	-3	NOT go out with boys’ girls (opposite sex)

Be liked by teachers	3	2	1	S-46	-1	-2	-3	NOT be liked by teachers
Wear your hair (or make-up) DIFFERENT than your friends'	-3	-2	-1	C-43	1	2	3	Wear your hair (or make-up) like your friends do
Go out for a sports team	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	NOT go out for sports
Get beer or liquor before you're 18	3	2	1	M67	-1	-2	-3	NOT get beer or liquor until you're 18
HOW STRONG is the pressure from your FRIENDS to:	LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO PRESSURE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	LOT	Or to:
NOT ask your friends who you should go out with	-3	-2	-1	C-17	1	2	3	Go out only with someone your friends say is okay to date
Talk back or "smart off" to adults	-3	-2	-1	F-53	1	2	3	Show respect for adults
Go to the games at school (football, basketball, etc.)	3	2	1	P-26	-1	-2	-3	NOT go to school games
NOT cut classes or skip school	3	2	1	S-44	-1	-2	-3	Cut classes or skip school
NOT go to concerts	-3	-2	-1	P-31	1	2	3	Go to concerts
Ignore what your parents tell you to do	-3	-2	-1	F-62	1	2	3	Do what your parents tell you to do
Have the SAME opinion about things as your friends do	3	2	1	C-33	-1	-2	-3	Have DIFFERENT opinions than your friends do
Try to get good grades	3	2	1	S-59	-1	-2	-3	NOT try for good grades
NOT "trash" things or vandalize property	-3	-2	-1	M51	1	2	3	"Trash" or vandalize things (write on walls, break windows, etc.)
Try to be thin	3	2	1		-1	-2	-3	Try to be fat
NOT let your parents know where you go, what you do	-3	-2	-1	F-50	1	2	3	Tell your parents where you go and what you do
Listen to the music, groups your friends think are good	3	2	1	C-36	-1	-2	-3	Listen to music and groups that no one else likes
NOT go "all the way" (not have sexual intercourse)	-3	-2	-1	M52	1	2	3	Have sexual intercourse (go "all the way")
Get along well with your parents	3	2	1	F-53	-1	-2	-3	"Hassle" your parents
"Party" (be rowdy)	3	2	1	P-47 M52	-1	-2	-3	NOT "party" (not be rowdy)
Go out with friends on weekends	3	2	1	P-61	-1	-2	-3	Stay home on weekends

NOT do any hard drugs	-3	-2	-1	M55	1	2	3	Do hard drugs
Do things to impress mem- bers of the opposite sex	3	2	1	P-46	-1	-2	-3	Try NOT to impress members of the opposite sex
Give teachers a hard time	-3	-2	-1	S-42	1	2	3	Be nice to teachers

SCORING:

Each item is scored from -3 to +3, with the «No Pressure» option scored as zero. Subscale scores are derived by taking the mean of item scores.

In the 'No Pressure' box above, in place of the zero score is a letter indicating the subscale with which the item is associated, and a figure indicating the corrected item-to-scale correlation. Items with nothing in this box are not associated with any of the 5 subscales. C = peer conformity; F = family involvement; P = peer involvement; S = school involvement; M = misconduct.

Interview Guidance

Topic: How do peers influence Taiwanese teenagers' attitude toward romantic relationships?

Based on teachers' observation, the questions aim to explore how relationships can be influenced by peer.

- Background information:
 1. What counselling training course did you take?
 2. How many years have you taught/ been school counsellor?
 3. What is the responsibility of being a home teacher/school counsellor
- Peer influence
 4. What kind of peer influence do teenagers normally have?
 5. Positive influences? Negative influence?
 6. What do young people consult about peer relationships?
- Romantic relationships
 7. Do young people have relationships?
 8. What do they consult about relationship?
- Peer and relationship
 9. What influences from peer might affect young people's behaviour to relationships?
 10. What do they consult you about peers and relationships?

Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire to explore the relations between adolescents' peer influences and their romantic relationships. There are three sections in this questionnaire;

- Background information
- Romantic relationships
 - In Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, romance has a definition of when you feel love and sexual attraction for someone.
 - The wild survey of young people suggests that romance is when two persons fancy each other.
- Peer topic

Please read and answer the questions clearly. The information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The data will be used only for the purpose of the research. Please tick the proper answer and state your opinions.

1. Background information

- 1.1 Age: _____
- 1.2 Gender: ☐ female ☐ male

2. Romantic relationship

This section will deal with the meaning of romantic relationships and what adolescents think about romantic relationships and where you obtain information. Please read each statement and tick your choices.

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Uncertain
Agree
Strongly Agree

2.1 Romantic relationships are generally a positive thing ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2.2 I don't think I am ready for romantic relationships

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

2.3 I know about romantic relationships from friends

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

2.4 I know about romantic relationships from media (TV, internet, book)

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

2.5 I know about romantic relationships from family

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

2.6 I have romantic relationships experiences

☐ yes

☐ no

3. Peer topic

The following questions will be focusing on the topics that young people may talk about with friends in relation to romantic relationships. Please read each statement and tick your choices.

	<div>Strongly Agree</div>	<div>Agree</div>	<div>Uncertain</div>	<div>Disagree</div>	<div>Strongly Disagree</div>
3.1 I talk about the person I fancy with my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 I talk about the person I fancy with parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 I talk about the person I fancy with teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 When my friends are in romantic relationships, I want to be in love too	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.5 My friends suggest who I should go out with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.6 My friends' experiences help me deal with my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.7 My friends talk about having physical contact with their boy/girlfriends (physical contact includes holding hands, kiss, petting and intercourse)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.8 I want to have physical contact because my friends said that is good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.9 I always follow my friends’ advice regarding romantic relationship

☐☐☐☐☐

3.10 I am good at keeping secrets about romantic relationships

☐☐☐☐☐

3.11 I like gossiping about romantic relationships

☐☐☐☐☐

3.12 When my friends are in romantic relationships, I feel jealous

☐☐☐☐☐

3.13 When my friends are in romantic relationships, I feel happy

☐☐☐☐☐

3.14 When my friends are in romantic relationships, I feel isolated

☐☐☐☐☐

♥ Please answer the following questions if you have romantic experiences:

3.15 Are you influenced in anyway by your friends in relation to romantic relationships?

☐ yes☐ no

3.16 When I am in a romantic relationship, I like to go out with my boy/girlfriend with other couples

☐☐☐☐☐

3.17 I prefer being with my girl/boyfriend alone

☐☐☐☐☐

3.18 I like to ask my friends’ opinions about what to wear for a date

☐☐☐☐☐

3.19 I talk about my boy/girlfriend with my friends

☐☐☐☐☐

3.20 I talk about my boy/girlfriend with parents

☐☐☐☐☐

3.21 I talk about my boy/girlfriend with teachers

☐☐☐☐☐

3.22 Do you think peers could influence nowadays adolescents’ romantic relationships?

☐ yes☐ no

Thanks for your cooperation!!

Please put the questionnaire in to the envelope and seal it before return.

Questionnaire—Chinese vision

你好！這份問卷要探討青少年同儕影響與兩性/同性交往之間的關係，希望大家可以針對自己遇過的情況回答。這份問卷包含三個部份，

第一部分，個人資料；

第二部份，戀愛關係；

字典的定義：戀愛指的是當你對某個人有愛與性的吸引力；

受訪青少年覺得，戀愛是指兩個人互相愛慕。

第三部份：同儕話題。

請仔細閱讀下列問題並依據你的認同程度回答。所有提供的資訊將會保密與匿名，不必擔心資料外洩，這些資料只僅供研究參考。

英國新堡大學教育所辛旻靜

1.個人資料：

1.1 我的年齡：_____

1.2 我的性別： ☐女 ☐男

2.愛情關係：

這階段的問題是探討愛情的意義—青少年認為愛情是什麼？以及青少年是從何得到這方面的資訊？請仔細閱讀下列問題，並根據你的情況勾選或圖滿出你的答案。

	非常同意	同意	不確定	不同意	非常不同意
2.1 我覺得談戀愛對我們來說是很好的事情。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.2 我覺得我還沒準備好要談戀愛。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.3 我從朋友那裡知道戀愛是什麼。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.4 我從媒體方面知道戀愛是什麼。 (媒體包含電視與網路)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.5 我從家人那裡知道戀愛是什麼。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.6 我認為戀愛是_____					
2.7 我有談過戀愛的經驗	<input type="checkbox"/> 是	<input type="checkbox"/> 否			

3.同儕話題：

以下問題將針對同儕團體裡討論與戀愛關係相關的話題，請仔細閱讀並依照你的情況回答問題，選出最能表達你意見的圓圈，勾選或圖滿。

	非常同意	同意	不確定	不同意	非常不同意
3.1 我會和我的朋友談論自己喜歡的對象。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 我會和我的父母談論自己喜歡的對象。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 我會和我的老師談論自己喜歡的對象。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 當我的朋友在戀愛中，我也會想要戀愛。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.5 我的朋友會跟我說誰比較適合。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.6 朋友的戀愛經驗有助於處理我自己的戀愛問題。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.7 朋友會討論他們和男／女朋友間肢體接觸的事情。 (肢體接觸包含牽手，接吻，愛撫與性行為)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.8 當朋友談到肢體接觸的感覺很美好，我也會動心 想要試試看。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.9 有關感情的事情，我接受朋友的建議。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.10 我很會替朋友保守有關感情的秘密。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.11 我喜歡和朋友聊有關感情的八卦。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.12 當我好朋友戀愛時我覺得忌妒。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.13 當我好朋友戀愛時我覺得很開心。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.14 當我好朋友戀愛時我覺得我被冷落了。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
♥ 如果你有談戀愛的經驗，請回答以下問題					
3.15 整體來說，我覺得我的朋友對我的戀愛有影響。	<input type="checkbox"/> 是			<input type="checkbox"/> 否	
3.16 當我有男／女朋友時，我喜歡和其他對情侶一起 約會（團體約會）。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.17 我喜歡和我男／女朋友單獨相處。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.18 我有約會時我會先問朋友怎麼穿著打扮比較好。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.19 我會和我朋友談論我和男／女朋友交往的事情。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.20 我會和我父母談論我和男／女朋友交往的事情。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.21 我會和我老師談論我和男／女朋友交往的事情。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.22 你覺得同儕朋友對現今青少年的戀愛關係有沒 ☐有 ☐無
有影響呢？

謝謝你的合作，提供你寶貴的意見！

請將填好的問券放入所附信封中，並將信封封起來後交還。